Altarity : choosing schools : choosing identities in London

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Choosing Schools

Choosing Identities in London

By

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Abstract

This ethnographic study delineates the experiences of immigrant families living in London as they engage with local schools. The findings chapters of the dissertation explore issues of access, by following the parents as they enter London's educational marketplace and as they choose a school for their children. The study portrays the process of educational choice from their perspective as newcomers, highlighting their positioning in the educational marketplace and the significance of their skills and resources as educational consumers.

The findings reveal eight types of capitals that these families draw on as they engage with the education market. These are: cultural properties, social resources, identities, symbolic assets, psychological empowerment, cognitive capacities, economic means and statutory positioning. The analyses highlight the development that occurred in the choosers' consumerist skills over time, suggesting that there may be a way to empower disadvantaged choosers to obtain improved positions as educational consumers.

A central theme in this study is the occurrence of a communal pattern of schooling among this group of families. Searching for the factors that occasion segregation in education, the focus of the research shifted to explore the role of the choosers' networks. The findings suggest that by using various control mechanisms, these networks engendered a continual pattern of schooling resulting in segregation and closure.

'Choosing schools – choosing identities' stands for the main argument of this study which states that the choice of school, as an act of consumerism, represents the choosers' collective identities, and at the same time plays a significant role in reinventing these identities.

"The history of society and culture is, in large measure, the history of the struggle with the endlessly complex problems of difference and otherness. Never have the questions posed by difference and otherness been more pressing than they are today.

The issue of difference is undeniably political. Is difference tolerable? Are others to be encouraged to express and cultivate their difference? Or is difference intolerable? Are others who are different to be converted, integrated, dominated, excluded or repressed?

The Ghettos of Europe, America, and South Africa, the walls in Germany, China and Korea, and battlefields throughout the world testify to the urgency of the issue of difference.

A century that opened with the publication of "The Interpretation of Dreams" should have learned by now that the repressed never goes away but always returns - sometimes violently.

As we approach the millennium, the fires ignited in the ovens of Europe Threaten to encompass the entire globe. Holocaust is one response to difference..."

(Taylor 1988:I).

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1. Introduction:

Setting The Scene

Blending the personal into the research agenda

In a way, this dissertation is very personal. After all, I am an immigrant and a member of the community I studied.

I came to London in 1995 with my family, aiming to pursue a PhD course in education. My initial interest was in the school choice process, and mainly in the experiences of parents and children in the educational marketplace. I did not anticipate then, that I would study the experiences of my own fellow countrymen who live in London, assuming the role of an ethnographer in my own back garden. Nor did I envisage, to what extent this study would describe and analyse my own experiences as an Israeli immigrant parent raising children in London. Indeed, as the following accounts from my research journal demonstrate, my personal experiences were blended into the research agenda, informing the research process.

Lost in the marketplace

Soon after our arrival to London we had to choose a school for our children. This was the first time that we were involved in the school choice process as parents. Prior to our arrival I had studied school choice policies and practices for a few years, and therefore I had hoped that my previous involvement in studying the process would have equipped me to handle this process calmly, and enable us to find our way in this unfamiliar education market. However, we

soon discovered that our theoretical and practical Israeli-based knowledge was insufficient at best, and misleading at worst. Moreover, our poor knowledge of the local education system with its rules, norms and procedures, together with our limited English language skills made it difficult for us to glean the necessary information, gain access to the local schools and complete the registration process. Indeed, being strangers to the system meant we were disadvantaged and, at that point, very lost.

Consequently, on the third day of our arrival we turned for help to the Israeli community in London in an attempt to gather information about the local schools and registration procedures. Our networking has led us to few families who were able to provide the much needed information and guidance. Two weeks later, we registered both children at a school, which had the largest number of Israeli children in the area. I was well aware that I had not applied any of the techniques and pre-prepared mental processes of educational choice that I expected to and planned before our arrival.

Later that year I learned that other Israeli parents had gone through the same process of school choice: relying heavily on the informal Israeli network to make their choice, and following a communal pattern of schooling. The networking process and the role of the ethnic community in the school choice process, intrigued me. It seemed informal and occasional, yet very efficient in reproducing a distinct pattern of schooling for this immigrant community.

Strangers in school

Accompanying my children during their first week in their new school in London was very significant for me and for the conduct of this study. My experiences as a parent, and as an Israeli in a British school provoked many questions related to school choice - both the process and its educational and social outcomes.

I recall the first day of school very clearly (at Alton Primary LEA school). My partner and I entered the main hall with the children. Both children were holding

our hands firmly absorbing the new and unfamiliar environment, its colors, scent and sound. The sound of the unfamiliar language, its tones and pitch made it all seem strange and unwelcoming, even hostile. I could feel the children's anxiety. I was as nervous as they were.

As we walked through the hall we heard a few children chatting happily in Hebrew. The children smiled and looked at us in relief. On our way to Head's office we heard a group of Israeli parents talking to each other. We smiled at them, and I greeted them, and asked where the head's office is located. One of them left the others and accompanied us to the office. On the way she said: 'I'm Gila, you must be new here... Difficult - Huh? Well, don't worry about it - we've all been through this...' She went confidently into the head's office, greeting everybody she met on the way, and chatted with the head. She then introduced us to him. Later, as our children settled in their classes, we realised that in each class there were few Israeli children.

At that point I began to recognise the effects of these events on us. The presence of other Israeli parents and children in the school had made a tremendous psychological effect: the school, which seemed so unfamiliar and unwelcoming when we entered - now seemed pleasant, even friendly.

During the first weeks at the school both my children and I expanded our social networks. Our newly established social ties were exclusively with Israelis attending the school. Through these ties I learned some facts about the Israeli community: its size, location, the existence of a supplementary Hebrew school, and which were the popular schools among Israeli families. Later I had observed that these particular schools have come to play a central role in the formation of the Israeli community in London; some of them have become ethnic institutions, through which communal ties are developed and maintained. More importantly, as my respondents' accounts indicated, the interaction between the school and the communal ties established through it, seems to affect the children's cultural identity.

I then started contemplating the possibilities of conducting a research among Israeli families. The core issues initially observed in my children's school - school choice in a minority group, community affiliation and ethnic identity - later became the main themes in the research reported here.

Altarity

'Altarity' is an elusive expression. Nonetheless, I chose it to symbolise the core theme underlying this study. Its suggestive attributes represent the relationship between the issues studied here: the forces that induce change, and the changes that occur, the junction between inclusion, exclusion and seclusion and the complex relationship between the researcher and the researched.

'Altarity' implies reinvention. In this study it symbolises the inner conflicts associated with making choices that reframe our identity. It signifies both the pain and confusion we encounter as we confront, or initiate changes in our lives, and the growth and liberation following transformation. The concept of Altarity contains both the action (to alter) and the outcome (to become altar); it means 'to change, or make different' and 'to be or become different'.

This research highlights the intersection between choice and change. As the families researched here experience the process of cultural transition, adapting to one culture, yet constantly moving between cultures, they are confronted with decisions and choices associated with their alliances and identities. School choice demonstrates one of these crossroads, where parents choose a socialisation agent for their children. Their narratives reveal patterns of change and their fluctuations, and their novelty and reformation; the external forces that induce change, and their inner potency for reinvention. Furthermore, their accounts depict their sense of 'otherness' or 'difference' - brought by transformation. 'Otherness' and 'difference' are keynotes in this study. Although these concepts are not directly dealt with in the study, they gradually develop throughout the chapters of the thesis reflecting the group's struggle to define their social identity and culture. Their quest for definition of distinctiveness, and the way in which they maintain and reproduce their 'otherness' portray and represent 'Altarity'.

Key notes

London schools are facing a major challenge today: incorporating and educating large and highly diverse waves of immigrant children arriving in London every year: currently nearly 40% of the 1.8 million pupils in London are international immigrants or refugees, and the number of school-aged newcomers is estimated at 10,000-15,000 per year (Storkey, Maguire and Lewis 1997; ONS 2004). The challenge of immigrant inclusion, however, is no novelty to London schools; London has been experiencing large in-migration flows for decades (Storkey, Maguire and Lewis 1997), yet, the spirit and dimensions of the recent immigration flows and new inclusion efforts are distinctly different from those of previous eras. British schools no longer attempt to 'assimilate' migrants, nor to 'turn immigrants into Englishmen', rather, they aspire to implement multicultural ideas, where diversity of cultures is recognised and appreciated (Gaine and George 1999). Immigrants and their offspring are now expected to 'integrate' into the British society; to become British and ethnic by adapting to the local culture, while maintaining their cultural heritage and identities (DES 1985).

The challenge of diversity and inclusion in education does not begin in the classroom. A preliminary stage towards inclusion in education is access: the right of entry to educational institutions. Since the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 (DES 1988) access to schools in London has been regulated by the 'open enrolment' market-orientated policy, a policy that has been widely criticised for reinforcing social divisions and inequalities, and for marginalising disadvantaged groups in society (Ball and Whitty 1990; Walford 1992). A large body of research has been conducted on the ERA 1988 and the introduction of market forces into the British educational arena. These studies (Reay 1998; Tomlinson 1998; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Bagley 1996) consistently demonstrate that some groups – mainly working class families, minority ethnic and racial groups are disadvantaged in the education market, and as a result, they have limited access to high quality educational

opportunities. Further, the research indicates that choice policies exacerbate the social segregation between groups along class, ethnic and racial lines. In analysing the processes that lead to these outcomes, the research reveals that some 'educational consumers' are poorly equipped to deal with the competitive educational market since they lack the adequate financial, cultural, symbolic or social resources.

One of the most vulnerable groups in society and the most likely to be negatively affected by market policies in education is immigrants. Indeed, as migration literature indicates (Castles and Miller 1998; Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998), most immigrants lack the necessary resources, whether financial, linguistic, cultural, social or informational, that will enable them to succeed in a competitive market system. In addition, their educational decisions may be affected by their pattern of integration in the host society and their inclination to maintain their original culture and identity. The choice of school may thus reflect their integrative stance, as the school becomes one of the means of achieving segregation or integration.

This research provides a suitable setting to examine questions of access in education, placing issues of disadvantage and segregation at its core. This study documents the experiences of immigrant families as they engage with the educational market in London and choose a school for their children. The focus of this study is on the skills and resources these families utilise as they assume their roles as educational consumers in the educational marketplace in their locality, and on the circumstances and factors that occasion segregation in education.

Most studies of school choice conclude at this point. This dissertation, however, goes beyond access, to explore some aspects of immigrant participation in education. The main chapters of this study recount the narratives of these families as the children learn in schools what it means to become British and ethnic. The chronicle charted here follows these parents

and children, as they, through their engagement with schools and their community, reinvent their own identities and shape their visions of ethnicity.

To document these processes I spent more than 3 years collecting data in my own immigrant community, the Israeli community in London. I interviewed and spoke with parents and children, and listened to them as they discussed their engagements with schools, and as they pondered and questioned their children's socialisation process in the framework of migration. Through their reports I began to explore the meaning of schooling and ethnicity in a multicultural context.

The story of this immigrant group is a reflection of the latest chapter in the struggle over diversity. How is the British society going to respond to the recent immigration flows? Will Londoners embrace diversity of cultures, languages and religions, or enforce a more narrow and exclusive vision of society? How will immigrants themselves and their communities respond? Will they seclude themselves into ethnic ghettos or make the effort to integrate? As this study demonstrates, such matters are structured by policies, but ultimately, they are determined by individuals and communities who choose how they interact with other individuals and organisations.

The school choice process conducted by a small immigrant group in London, seems to bring these questions close to the surface, challenging some of the core values of our society: the meaning of diversity and inclusion, the significance of race, religion, nationality, class and language in everyday life and in determining one's life chances, and our visions of citizenship and equality. The educational market becomes a site of contention and negotiation over these societal values.

The story of this immigrant community, offers a unique account of the process of immigrant participation in education, by exploring both their engagement with a competitive market, a process that highlights issues of access, disadvantage

and segregation; and the transformations that these families experience in their cultural identities, a process that brings to light the role of the school and the ethnic community in occasioning these transformations.

Research aims

This study explores the experiences of immigrant families as they engage with the educational market in London, and choose a school for their children. The focus of the forthcoming analyses is on the skills and resources they utilise as educational consumers and the circumstances and factors that occasion segregation in education.

The main objective of this study is to develop a conceptual framework, within which the choice of school and the schooling patterns of migrant groups may be analysed sociologically.

Theoretical perspectives

The theoretical stance adopted in this study is multi-disciplinary in nature, attempting to bring together the literature on international migration and post migration ethnicity (Gold 2002; Waldinger 1994; Zhou 1997b; Portes and Rambaut 1996; Light and Gold 2000; Borjas 1999) and the research on school choice, most of which builds on and develops Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu 1986a; 1990; Bourdieu and Boltanski 2000; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) on cultural reproduction in education.

However, following the grounded theory approach adopted in this study and the emergence of social capital as a 'core category' (Strauss 1987) in the data, I have also utilised and attempted to further develop the 'network approach' as a way of understanding the schooling experiences of migrant families in the social context within which they occur.

The Network approach has been applied widely in migration research to explore the effects of social capital within the framework of immigration (Gold, 1995; 2002; Sabar 2000; Light and Gold 2000; Portes 1998; Borjas 1995; Faist 2000) and to examine the ways in which social networks intervene in and influence individuals' immigration experiences: their motives to immigrate, their immigration decisions and their adaptation and socio-economic mobility in the host society. The network approach builds on the concept of social capital (Coleman 1988; Bourdieu 1986b; Burt 2000; Putnam 1993b) highlighting the capacity of social ties to cross borders and to erect social structures that affect both individuals and nations. This concept was further developed in this study to explore the role of social capital in the school choice process, and the role of school in generating social capital.

The organisation of this dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three parts:

The introduction chapters (2-3) offer a concise review of the literature on Israeli emigrants, followed by a brief discussion of the main theoretical construct underlying the analyses that follow: social capital. It is important to underline the limited scope of the review offered here: the introduction chapters are intentionally brief aiming to lay a conceptual framework rather than offer a comprehensive review, as further literature is integrated into the research findings chapters. Additionally, appendix A and B offer a brief literature review: appendix A depicts the immigration setting in which the school choice story of the researched community takes place, while appendix B reviews the research on school choice and displays the schooling arena that these newly arrived migrants encountered.

Chapters 4 describes the research methods applied in this study beginning with a discussion of the research perspective, and a description of the methods applied for data collection and the data analysis scheme. Chapter 5 portrays the respondents who took part in this study and chapter 6 describes the chosen schools, highlighting the communal pattern that emerged. In addition, appendix

C details the interviewees' socio-economic data and appendix D offers a reflexive account of the process of research.

The research findings are presented in chapters 7-10. Chapter 7 sets the scene for the research findings chapters by presenting the main arguments of this study and by introducing the three categories of choosers by which the findings chapters are organised. Chapters 8, 9 and 10 present the school choice process among three groups of choosers: the unsuspecting international choosers, the quasi- practiced newcomers and the competent –veterans.

Chapter 11 summarises the research findings and presents an analysis of the choosers' resources that emerged in the data as significant factors that families draw on as they engage with the education market. The chapter brings this dissertation to a close by developing the main argument of this study, which is captured in the title of this dissertation.

2. Caught Between Two Cultures: Israeli Emigrants

Fifty years ago, the state of Israel was established as a fulfilment of the Zionist's dream and in response to the Holocaust. However, even after 5 decades of independence, the state of Israel still struggles for existence. Citizens of Israel are expected to shoulder the daily burden of the struggle for existence, heavy though it may be. This expectation is reflected in one of the abiding values of the Israeli society: The value of 'Yerida' (emigration). Emigration from Israel is generally discouraged, and even scorned; citizens of Israel are expected not to leave the country, but to continue to share the collective burden. Emigrants are perceived as escaping the country's difficulties and their own responsibilities (Sobel 1986; Gold 1994). These perceptions prevail through the Israeli discourse as the meaning of 'Yerida' (emigration) is to descend, fail or fade, as opposed to 'Olim' - those who immigrate to Israel - who ascend, or succeed.

In spite of this rigid value system, it is estimated that today almost 500,000 Israelis (nearly 10% of the entire population) are living abroad, some on permanent basis, and some temporarily (Mittleberg and Sobel 1990). In Britain, it is estimated that there are currently around 50,000-60,000 Israelis, of which about 80% can be defined as Settlers, and the others may be defined as Sojourners. Most of the Israelis in Britain are living in London (Schmool and Cohen 1998).

Most of the literature on Israeli emigrants focuses on large communities of Israelis who reside in different parts of the USA, with very few conducted on Israelis immigrating to Europe (Gold 2002). Thus, much of the following review is based on research carried out among Israelis residing in the USA.

Emigration from Israel has attracted much attention in terms of research, since emigration is viewed as an indication of decline of the Jewish State (Gold 2002). Therefore, it is not surprising that a number of researchers centre their attention on the reasons for emigration (Sobel 1986; Ritterband 1986; Gold 1997), while many other studies explore the Israelis' pattern of integration in their host societies (Shokeid 1988; Cohen 1990; Gold 1994; Rosen 1993; Rosenthal and Auerbach 1992; Sabar 1989).

The reports on Israeli immigrants demonstrate that Israelis do not integrate in their localities nor form ties with the local Jewish communities and tend to associate mainly with their compatriots (Shokeid 1988; Ritterband 1986; Rosen 1992; Rosenthal and Auerbach 1992; Sabar 2000; Gold 2002). Although these studies suggest that Israeli emigrants are mainly middle-class, and are often highly skilled and economically stable (Freedman and Korazim 1986; Shokeid 1988; Gold 1997), this is not reflected in their patterns of assimilation: unlike other middle class white migrants, whose integration is considered a fairly smooth process (Light and Gold 2000) many Israeli migrants seem to remain marginal and alienated (Shokeid 1988).

The Israeli immigrants marginal position in the host society is frequently attributed to their stigmatised position: Israeli emigrants are viewed by Jews and Israelis alike, as violators of the Zionist ideology, whose very existence symbolise the rift in Zionism (Cohen 1989), and makes them an object of controversy (Rosen 1993). Shokeid (1993) argues that Israeli emigrants suffer an identity crisis that hinders their willingness to develop realistic, long term plans regarding their adjustment to life abroad, and prevents their integration within the host society. Other researchers argue that Israeli immigrants accept the negative 'Yored' stereotype, and as a result, consider their stay in the host country as temporary (Sabar 1989; Mittleberg and Sobel 1990). These researchers report the frequent mention by their interviewees of their plans to return to Israel, and their refusal to perceive themselves as (permanent) citizens of America (Sabar 1989; Shokeid 1988; Gold 1994). Such evidence of the

Israelis' conflicting feelings about their emigration, and their self perception as marginal and alienated, may explain their unwillingness to establish ties with host society members, Jews, or other ethnic groups, and their tendency to establish their own enclaves (Gold 1994; Urieli 1995).

Shokeid's (1993) study of the Israelis residing in New York and Gold's (1994) study of the Israeli community in Los Angeles reveal different patterns of ethnicity. While the Israelis in New York express 'a low profile ethnicity', displayed by the absence of formal organisations and organised communal activities, the Israelis' community ties in Los Angeles are based on formal and organised participation in local Israeli organisations as well as occasional and informal meetings and gatherings. Gold (1994) concludes that 'within this collectivity an Israeli immigrant can satisfy nearly all of his/her needs in Hebrew' (p. 333).

The development of the Israeli immigrant communities is combined with a strong accent on their national identity. Gold's (1997) findings demonstrate that the ethnic identity of Israeli emigrants is secular and nationalistic; while they celebrate the Jewish holidays, they do not take part in organised religious activities, and do not attend a synagogue on a regular basis. Although they speak Hebrew and maintain some of their original customs, they associate these behaviours to their 'Israeliness' rather than their 'Jewishness'.

The presence of young or school-aged children in the Israeli immigrant family often magnifies their doubts about their emigration. The research reveals (Gold 1994; Sabar 2000) that Israeli parents often attempt 'to raise Israeli children abroad' and thus search for means to maintain their children's attachment to the homeland. The difficulty of raising Israeli children abroad and preserving their national identity is reflected in the search for the appropriate educational routes to achieve this aim, with the choice between local non-denominational schools or Jewish religious schools often taking central stage in their decision making process (Gold 1994). For secular parents, both educational environments

contain the seeds of a potential conflict between the family's values and beliefs and the value system the school represents (Shokeid 1988; Gold 1994). Gold's (1994) findings reveal that in Los Angeles parents seek to deepen their children's involvement with other Israeli families, through formal and informal youth activities and gatherings, since they perceive these communal ties as means to preserve their children's national identities, culture and language and maintain their connection to the homeland. These research findings (Gold 2002) point to the importance of the ethnic community in the lives of immigrants, as the community becomes the main, sometimes the only, socialising agent for 'outsiders' who perceive themselves to be 'caught between two cultures'.

While the literature on Israeli migrants seems to underscore the significance of the school and the ethnic community in the lives of these families, and highlights their combined socialising effect on the children's identities, the school choice literature accentuates issues of access and disadvantage, suggesting that migrants' marginalised positioning as educational consumers may impede their school choice process affecting its short-term and long-term outcomes. The study reported here explores both aspects of the choice process, highlighting the interaction between them. As hinted in the title of this dissertation, by charting the school choice process among Israeli migrants residing in London, the study aims to conceptualise the relationship between collective identities and educational consumerism.

3. Core Theme: Social Capital

Social capital refers to the relationships between people (Coleman 1988; Bourdieu 1986b; Burt 2000; Putnam 1993a; 2000). It includes the basic concepts that link between people and create interpersonal networks (such as norms of loyalties and mutual obligations, shared fate, solidarity, communal membership, etc). The relationships that constitute social capital are those that can be used as a resource; that is: something individuals and groups can use to accomplish their objectives.

The significance of social capital lies in its outcomes: research conducted on both micro and macro levels, consistently shows that individuals and communities that are highly connected fair better than others (Woolcock and Narayan 2000). The social capital metaphor is thus a metaphor about advantage, in which society can be viewed as a market in which people and groups exchange goods and ideas in pursuit of their interests, where certain people or groups own a kind of resource – social capital - that enables them to enjoy higher returns on their efforts (Burt 2000).

Bourdieu (1986b) was the first to define social capital as a resource: 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital' (p. 249). He further argues that 'capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and the social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility' (p. 243). Bourdieu's emphasis is on social networks that provide access to groups' resources,

visualising social capital primarily as a resource, a means that is enabled through social connections, that can lead to increased economic capital as well as other sought after assets. Bourdieu's application of the concept examines how individuals draw on their relations to improve their economic standing. This conceptual distinction between social capital as a resource and its gains and outcomes is significant and often became blurred in some of the contemporary writings on the topic.

Further, Bourdieu's perception of social capital emphasises the ways in which social capital, like other class-based forms of capital, represents and reproduces the inherent structure of hierarchy and patterns of advantage in society. Bourdieu mainly utilises the concept to further unpack and explore the class structure of society and its reproductive mechanisms.

Coleman (1988) defines social capital by its function: 'the function identified by the concept of 'social capital' is the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources that they can use to achieve their interests' (Coleman 1988: S101). Similar to Bourdieu, Coleman defines social capital as a resource, a basis from which collective actions may be undertaken to meet mutual interests. Coleman's application of the concept is devoted to understanding the role of norms and sanctions within family and community networks that facilitate the attainment of human capital.

The 'social structure' Coleman (1988) refers to comprises the obligations and expectations, information channels, norms and sanctions that constrain or encourage certain kinds of behaviour and these 'exist in the relations among persons' (Coleman 1988: S100). Information is an important component of social capital as a basis for action and norms. Sanctions facilitate certain forms of action and constrain others. A central feature of social structures that generates social capital is closure, which is described by Coleman as sufficient ties among members of a group to ensure the observance of the group's norms.

A third key author in recent social capital debates is Putnam (1993a; 2000). Putnam is interested in how social capital works at the regional level to enhance

democratic institutions and economic development. Putnam operationalises the concept of social capital at a different social scale to both Bourdieu and Coleman, although his definition of the concept is drawn from Coleman. Putnam defines social capital as 'trust, norms and networks that facilitate cooperation' (Putnam 1993a: 167). Although he uses different terminology, he generally follows Coleman's and Bourdieu's notion of social capital as a resource that is generated through networks, through norms that facilitate collective action. He argues that norms of trust and reciprocity within networks are utilised by individuals and groups as social resources, and these can lead to various forms of collective action.

Whilst Coleman's work is focused at the individual level of human capital, Putnam's focus is at regional and national levels. The focus on outcomes for regions and nations distinguishes Putnam's work empirically from that of Coleman and Bourdieu but not in terms of the fundamental definition of the concept of social capital.

Social capital, then, is a resource to collective action; a resource that comprises the norms and sanctions of trust and reciprocity that operate within social networks. The structural components of networks such as 'size', 'density', the extent of 'closure' and relational aspects such as 'inequality', shape the capacity of a network to generate social capital. These dimensions are often studied by network analysts (Burt 1992; Granovetter 1973; 1985; Wellman and Wortley 1990). The outcomes of the social capital comprise a variety of forms and scales of collective action. Here lies the key difference in the work of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam - they employ the concept to understand different types of collective action and pitch their analyses at different social scales. Such differences in 'purpose' and 'analysis' should not be mistaken, however, for contradictory definitions of the concept of social capital.

While most writers tend to perceive social capital as a resource and argue that it can facilitate the progress of individuals, groups and nations, while the lack of it can impede development (Woolcock 1998; Putnam 1993), it has been noted

that social capital has a significant 'downside' (Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Portes and Landolt 1996). Communities, groups or networks that are isolated, parochial or working at cross-purposes to society's collective interests can hinder economic and social progress. Exclusionary practices, restriction of individual freedom and downward levelling pressure are some examples of the negative effects that social capital can have.

Migration networks

Long before the term social capital came into common usage, researchers of immigration acknowledged the centrality of networks in migration processes (Gold 2000). They examined the role of networks in migration decisions, the various forms of assistance offered within immigrant communities, the exchange of resources between communities of origin and settlement, and the development of economic and cultural infrastructures based on ethnic ties (Light and Gold 2000; Portes 1998; Faist 2000; Borjas 1992). These, and many other examples illustrate the ways in which migrants' social capital serves as a facilitator in the immigration process and as a resource, which is capable of increasing individuals' autonomy.

Social ties directly affect migration patterns by promoting movement from one location to another, by discouraging migratory movements, and by encouraging (or discouraging) return-migration. Social networks are capable of advancing migration from specific countries to particular destinations, by offering information about the destination country and by linking prospective migrants to those already residing in the host country. Faist (2000) maintains that chain migration typically begins with pioneer agents who become brokers of information and support for newly arriving compatriots. Chain migration occurs when a large number of people leave one country to a specific destination. Migration networks in the host country support newly arriving immigrants by providing information and help in a variety of domains, such as housing, employment, finance, health, education, recreation and more. Furthermore, these ties can be crucial in reducing the emotional costs of migration and

cultural marginality (Gold 2000; Kim 1995). Researchers seem to agree that migration networks can alleviate some initial adaptation difficulties, by making the immigration process more manageable and by reducing the risks involved in relocation, both economic and psychological (Faist 2000; Alba, Massey, and Rambaut 1998; Light and Gold 2000; Zhou and Bankston 1994). Tilly (1990) maintains that these ties can function as vehicles through which social constraints may be escaped.

Once migration networks are formed it becomes easier for others to migrate. This often leads to a continual migratory movement between two locations, where newcomers mainly follow a 'beaten path' and helped by immigrants already residing in the destination country (Faist 2000). At times, 'a culture of migration' may develop which legitimises emigration and the provision of support for newly arriving immigrants (Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998). Some helpers become facilitators of immigration and in some communities, a 'migration industry' evolves, which consists of recruitment organisations, immigration lawyers, estate agents and other middlemen people who offer services to newcomers. Among these, there may be those who advance illegal migration (such as smugglers), may exploit immigrants or put them at risk (Castles and Miller 1998). In time, the structures that are established by these networks may promote the independence of migratory flows. This occurs when the web of connections reaches a threshold level where they amount to an autonomous social structure that supports immigration (Castles and Miller 1998). In the long run, these migration networks may affect international relations between countries by creating an infrastructure that enables the exchange of resources (human and material) between the two countries (Faist 2000).

More importantly, migration networks provide the basis for community formation in the immigration area. Some migrant groups develop social and economic infrastructures that enable their members to maintain a particular way of life in terms of cultural and linguistic orientation and many other aspects (Gold 2000;

Faist 2000; Light and Gold 2000). These structures may persist for generations, developing into what is commonly defined as 'ethnic communities'. However, while some migrant communities develop into a permanent structure, some do not survive beyond the first or second generation of immigrants and seem to disintegrate when migration flows decline.

The brief review of the literature on social capital and migration networks suggest that social capital can have a significant effect on migrants' lives, especially when facing a competitive market arena such as the educational market in London. In the findings chapter that follow I shall attempt to further develop these concepts to explore the role social capital plays in the choice of school.

4. Research Methods

The following chapters describe the research methods applied in this study and delineate the profile of the participants and their patterns of schooling. Chapter 4 opens with a brief explanation of the ethnographic research perspective adopted in this study, and this is followed by a description of the instruments and procedures employed for data collection, and an explanation of the data analysis scheme. Chapter 5 portrays the participants who took part in the study and chapter 6 describes the schools the interviewees' children have attended since their arrival to Britain.

The research perspective

In 'Ethnography and ethnographers of and in education' Green and Bloome (1996) draw a distinction among three approaches to ethnography: doing ethnography, adopting an ethnographic perspective, and using ethnographic tools. They argue that

> *Doing ethnography* involves the framing, conceptualising, conducting, interpreting, and reporting associated with a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group. By *adopting an ethnographic perspective,* we mean that it is possible to take a more focused approach (i.e. do less than a comprehensive ethnography) to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group. Central to an ethnographic perspective is the use of theories of culture and enquiry practices. The final distinction *using ethnographic tools* refers to the use of methods and techniques associated with fieldwork. These methods may or may not be guided by cultural theories or questions about the social life of group members (p. 183).

Following this classification, I considered the second definition, '*adopting an ethnographic perspective*', to be the most suitable for the research

perspective applied in this study. There are five elements that make this definition befitting:

Focus on culture: ethnographers typically study groups or communities with an intention to reveal and analyse their common culture (Goodenough 1981; Spradley 1980; Heath 1982). This study centres on a community that has a distinct culture and clear boundaries. Although the research did not commence with an intention to study the cultural practices of this community, the analysis of the immigrant community and the interpretation of its culture gradually became the core of the research, concentrating on the ways in which participants perceive and interpret their educational experiences through their trans-national cultural lenses. Thus, the school choice process was perceptibly occurring as a key event through which the group's culture was revealed.

Doing fieldwork: during the data collection phase ethnographers are expected to become immersed in the research field, living among the people they study and developing an insider's (emic) perspective which would give them an insight into the group's culture and the ways in which members perceive and interpret their world (Geertz 1973; Heath 1982; Denzin 1998). Researching Israeli immigrants in London placed me in a peculiar position, where I was studying a community that I belonged to, living among people with whom I share an identity, a homeland culture and language, as well as the immigration experience. Yet, in all other respects I was a newcomer to this community, having to acquaint myself with it as any stranger would. Thus, although my emic perspective was facilitated by the shared background and membership, it has indeed developed during the course of the research, leading to the exploration of the group's culture as a medium through which members view and interpret their lives.

Data collection methodology: the methods applied in this study were a combination of qualitative tools typically used by ethnographers. These included: participant observation, interviewing informants, collection of

relevant documents and writing a research diary. These qualitative methods were used simultaneously in order to allow for triangulation. Additionally, ethnographers often stay in the field for few years until data saturation occurs (Denzin 1978; Fetterman 1998; Hammersley 1990). In this study, the data collection phase lasted for nearly three years, during which I had experienced data saturation in some topics and changes in the research agenda as the gradual focusing process occurred.

Data analysis and the emergence of grounded theory: data analysis in ethnographic research is often described as an analytic and intuitive process which is meant to interpret, structure, relate and generally give meaning to the events being described, the researched community and its culture (Strauss and Corbin 1994). Grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) rests on a commitment to develop theory from and in relation to data. Those adopting this approach often enter the field with a general question, and then gradually focus their inquiry and develop a substantive theoretical model as they implement a repetitive cycle of data-collection-coding-interpretation (Hutchinson 1988). Data collection and data analysis in this study were indeed inter-related in this way. The initial analytic themes which began to emerge in the first few weeks of data collection, were gradually developed and coalesced to construct the theoretical framework presented in the findings chapters of this dissertation.

Report writing: the ethnographic perspective is perhaps best revealed through the particular genre and style of report writing. Ethnographers attempt to communicate the participants' voices; to delineate the respondents' experiences from their standpoint and as they interpret them (Hammersley 1990). Additionally, ethnographers often engage in reflective writing that exposes their own backgrounds and standpoints and examine how these may have affected the conduct of the research (Denzin 1998; Goodhall 2000). The researcher's main task is to deconstruct the cultural features that structure the participants' perceptions, and to make these features accessible and comprehensible to readers (Fetterman 1998).

Central to this endeavour is the use of theories of culture (Harris and Johnson 2000). This study followed this approach for report writing, using migration, cultural and linguistic theories as the main theoretical frameworks.

Focused approach: the term *adopting an ethnographic perspective*, acknowledges that the current study was not a comprehensive ethnography of the Israeli immigrant community in London. As the above definition proposes (Green and Bloome 1996), this study has a specific and rather restricted agenda that centres on education, which limits both the scope of the study and the profile of respondents.

It is perhaps important to acknowledge here, that for a long time I did not consider the research perspective as ethnographic, and in my initial papers I defined it as a qualitative study that was, at best, using ethnographic tools. This was mainly due to the fact that the study was not planned primarily as an ethnographic endeavour, but evolved over time through my tactical responsive decision-making process.

Changing spots: from quantitative to ethnographic perspective

My initial intention was to conduct a quantitative study in order to examine the patterns of schooling and school choice processes among Israeli families living in London. The research plan included collecting data by self-administered questionnaires from a sample of 300 families, a statistical analysis of the data in an attempt to find a statistical model that would explain the group's educational choices, and then writing a report that would present and explain the statistical model.

During the first phase of the research I designed a fairly detailed questionnaire, and decided to carry out a pilot. However, it quickly became clear that the questionnaire, and the quantitative approach generally, were inadequate for this study. The type of data that was gleaned from the initial pilot sessions included elaborate, thoughtful, reflexive and often emotional,

personal narratives that detailed the respondents' positions, concerns and dilemmas as immigrant parents raising children in Britain, and recorded the ways in which they engaged with the educational market. Initially I tried to modify the questionnaire by adding open-ended questions, but by the ninth session I realised that a more appropriate research tool would be an interview. Based on these pilot cases I designed a loosely-structured interview schedule, which became my main research instrument.

Later that year, as the primary and secondary school choice process begun, I attended various school events and communal gatherings. I took records of these events and many of the conversations that took place in these occasions between Israeli parents and collected various documents.

About 6 months into the process I realised that it was not only the research methods that had changed, but the entire perspective of the study had shifted, including the main research questions and the theoretical perspective. I had to re-think my research perspective, consequently defining a much wider research question than originally intended, and a theoretical perspective that placed the ethnic culture and migration processes at the centre of the research agenda. By that time, a set of grounded theoretical themes began to emerge from the data.

Data collection

Negotiating access to the research site

Looking at my research positioning retrospectively, I would describe the ways in which I had gained access to the research site as a four-stage process:

Tracing the community and obtaining initial information: this phase occurred during our first months in London, approximately a year prior to the commencement of the research:

> I arrived in London equipped with little knowledge of the Israeli community or links to it: I knew that some Israeli families resided in North West area, but had only rough ideas as to their whereabouts. At the time we had very limited network in London: we had known only one Israeli family and our relationship was then at its introductory stage.
> Indeed, I was then a complete stranger to the community, having to acquire the most basic information and establish new ties, slowly building up our social network (Research diary 10.12.96).

As noted in the Preface, most of the casual contacts that my family made during that year with Israeli families were established through the school my children attended, and by their social ties and activities. Thus, the choice of school for the children and our parenthood were essential factors in gaining access to the communal site (which was yet to become a research site).

My initial ties enabled me to glean some basic information on the community: its location, size, history, its organisations, the favourite schools, children's clubs and play areas, the favoured coffee shops, clubs and many other meeting places where Israeli families tended to congregate. I also acquired some basic information as to the human profile of community: its age structure, marital status, occupational and educational profiles, and gained some initial insights into the main sub-divisions within the community. Thus, although I shared with community members fundamental cultural features (identity, language, culture, homeland background and migratory

circumstances) I was, at that stage, an outsider, having to acquire the most fundamental information in order to locate and access community members, and to go through the slow process of networking and establishing new relationships in order to build our social circle.

Becoming a member:

> 'How does one become a member in a community that functions almost solely on an informal level? There was no definitive moment of membership granting, and thus 'becoming a member' was much about the nuances and subtleties of social situations, where familiarity, friendship, closeness, care and togetherness were displayed. It was about walking on the main road or entering a popular meeting place (coffee shop, school gate, bookshop etc.) and being hailed and greeted, being invited to other people's houses for social gatherings, parties and Jewish holiday celebrations and taking part in these occasions, it was about being informed of events that took place in private (trips, outings, lectures, etc.). Being a member meant having a network through which information could be obtained and feeling secure enough to request assistance when that was needed. It was also about being embedded enough to engage in communal gossip. Perhaps more importantly, being a member was about our own sense of familiarity and belonging, and about the 'feeling at home': the comfort and confidence that emanates from this type of communal embeddedness (Research diary, 19.9.97).

Analysing this phase retrospectively, I realise that it was during our first year in London that I had negotiated entry to the Israeli community. However, I was doing it from my position as a new member and not as a researcher. By the time I began the research (a year later), I was a complete-member-researcher (Adler and Adler 1987).

Accessing the parents' school-based-network: I began my first year as a research student at King's in October 1996, and soon afterwards, data collection commenced. This marked the third phase of my entry process, in which I had already gained access to the community, but now

needed to define the contours of the research site and fashion my research role. Adler and Adler (1987) argue that of all research positions, complete-member-researchers are the most similar to the people they study. This indeed facilitates entry yet it changes the character of the entry process: instead of having to bring my research self to the setting and carve out a membership role, I had to create a space for my research role to arise within a familiar site and existing relationships.

On a more practical level, this stage of the entry process entailed a search for potential respondents who were parents of school aged children, and sharing my plans to conduct a research with friends and acquaintances, key informants, and other potential participants. As a result of the previous stages of my entry process and my membership status my negotiation of access was minimal:

> I found the parents very collaborative. All I had to do is tell them about the research and some would offer to be interviewed before I had even asked. Some have shown a genuine interest in what I was doing, and asked questions about the research. Others, I felt, were flattered by the fact that they were the subject of a research. Generally, parents were very willing, even happy to devote the time and energy to be interviewed. I had a few occasions where parents approached me saying 'oh, have I got a story for you!' Often after interviews parents opened their telephone book and were helping with the snowballing process by giving me details of friends and acquaintances. Some negotiated entry for me by telling their friends about the research. One mother went so far as to arrange a meeting between a potential interviewee and me. This simplified both access and snowballing significantly.
> Yet, there were times I felt the research had become a sort of communal project; I was also aware of the gossip that went on. I sometimes worried about how this might affect the research. (Research diary, 22.5.97).

In this phase, my motherhood, my ties in the community and in the school-based-mothers-network in particular, were extremely valuable. But the most important factor that made my presence in the research arena most natural

was the fact that I too, was facing the secondary school choice process with my then 11 year old son:

> My engagement with the choice process enabled me to take part in the formal and informal meetings and conversations associated with it; together we went to parents' evenings, open evenings and school visits and have driven children to interviews and exams. We shared information about schools and their entry procedures, passing brochures, league-tables printouts, OFSTED reports and wwws between us. We informed each other on open evenings and exam dates, and consulted each other when filling forms or writing letters to schools. We debated educational issues, ventilated our emotions and corroborated our decisions. And I was there, fully engaged, as a worried mother and researcher (Research diary, 2.6.98).

My network had expanded gradually during that period. During the first months of the data collection I interviewed 17 parents who were part of my immediate network. This included friends, friends of friends, parents' of my children's friends, and other people I had incidentally come across at various places as I went on my daily routines (such as: at my children's school or afternoon classes, at the Israeli supplementary school, at school events and some private social gatherings). At some point I felt that this network might be too limited (and perhaps too convenient!) and I began to purposefully search for other parents, mainly in the favoured shopping or leisure areas and numerous formal and informal social gatherings that took place among Israelis (such as: coffee shops, bookshops, supermarkets, children's play areas, adult or children's parties, public celebrations, charity events, public lectures, etc.). This enabled me to extend the research arena going beyond my comfort zone. My search was fairly fruitful and resulted in 23 additional interviews. Because my access to this group was not through snowballing, I feared they would be less cooperative, but to my surprise they were willing to collaborate as the previous group of interviewees.

Accessing the a-typical: during the previous data collection phases I had mainly focused on families who were 'typical' community members – those who chose to live in the communal area, who sent their children to the

favoured schools, and whose social life revolved around the community. The last phase was devoted to exploring the a-typical Israeli migrant families: those who chose to live outside the communal areas, whose children attended schools where they were often the only Israeli child in the school, and those who detached themselves from the community, by choice or chance. This stage required different detection and networking methods than those used previously: I could no longer network among community members to locate these respondents and I was uncertain of their co-operation:

> Access to this category was indeed much more difficult: I tried through Israeli businesses who were located out of the ghetto, and then tried bigger international businesses that had a fairly large network of Israeli clients. I tried to locate families through Israeli official organisations (the consulate, the aliyah dept, the embassy, the BICC, etc.) and through the expatriate network. I even attended large-scale communal events, and tried to network my way there. In the course of the search I got many invalid links (inaccurate names and phone numbers and many whose characteristics were irrelevant for the research). Thankfully, there were some valid and fruitful links, which led to people that I had later interviewed. However, among this category only few were able to assist with the snowballing process: most have had no ties with other Israeli families.
> Albeit the initial difficulties in locating these families, I found these interviewees as collaborative as the others, and in fact most were eager to meet and speak about their lives (Research diary, 18.10.99).

Instruments used for data collection

The instruments used in this study for data collection were **loosely structured interviews** with parents and **records of casual events** in which I was a participant observer. Additionally, I collected some relevant (public domain) **documents.** These will be described next.

The interviews

The interviewees

Between February 1997 and September 1999, I conducted 61 interviews. Of these, 60 were with parents of school-aged children, and one was a knowledgeable informant – the Israeli Consul in London, who provided general information on the community. The first informants I had interviewed were those who took part in the pilot phase (n=9). Among the 60 parent interviewees, 7 were key informants with whom I had many casual conversations, in which we discussed some research ideas. These key informants were often described by others as 'central figures' in the Israeli community, or 'opinion leaders', who had valuable insights about their lives in London and about the community. These informants also helped in the snowballing process. In addition, I interviewed 9 'educational informants' who had educational backgrounds and official educational roles (head teachers or teachers working at the Israeli schools in London or at Hebrew departments at schools, colleges or universities). These informants were asked both about their experiences as parents and their insights as professionals.

As detailed earlier, in order to locate and access interviewees I had engaged in networking and snowballing, slowly enlarging the contours of the research site.

Education and the division of labour in the family

Most of the interviewees in this study (n=52) were mothers. In addition, 6 fathers were interviewed, and in two interviews both parents participated. In total, 62 parents were interviewed (54 women and 8 men). This includes three lone mothers and two lone fathers.

The high proportion of women interviewees in this study is a common phenomenon in school choice research (Gewirtz Ball and Bowe 1995; Reay 1997; David, West and Ribbens 1994), and is mainly explained by women's

roles in the household and their tendency to shoulder the responsibility for their children's education. In this study self selection occurred, as I had left the decision regarding which of the parents will be interviewed to the parents themselves. During introduction calls and interviews, parents often pointed to the women's dominant role where educational issues were concerned:

Gila: Education was always my responsibility (interview no. 3).

Liora: He is not really into this. I guess with me being a teacher he just left the whole thing to me (interview no. 10).

Roy: My wife is in charge – she's the minister of culture, education and social life (Interview no. 32).

As these quotes demonstrate, the interviewees' willingness to take part in this study was indeed related to the division of labour between parents. There were also other circumstances that made mothers more accessible and more willing to take part in the study. The most significant one was the high proportion of unemployed mothers among interviewees. These unemployed mothers were more than happy to devote time for the interview and assist in the snowballing process. In contrast, all the fathers were in full time employment or education and their time constraints indeed made them less accessible.

The snowballing process, mainly informed by women interviewees, also circumscribed the 'landscapes of research', confining it, to some extent, to the Israeli women's networks. Also my own gender may have had some effect on the snowballing process, facilitating access to the women's networks.

The interview schedule

The interview schedule included four general topics: **background** – including parents' education, profession, marital status, life in Israel, and religiousness. The second topic focused on **migration issues** including their pre-immigration circumstances and reasons for migration, their adaptation process, prospects for return-migration, attitudes towards Israel, language learning and cultural adaptation, and parents' and children's

identities. The main part of the interview focused on **education** and included a detailed report of the schools the children attended and the transitions the children had experienced, parental expectations and satisfaction from the schools. The school choice process was also pondered thoroughly and this included questions regarding the first choice process after arrival and the most recent one, the information that was available to parents during the process, their considerations for choice, as well as other aspects of the process. The last topic related to the **social and communal** aspect of their lives as migrants: the children's and the parents' social ties both in London and in Israel and their perceptions of the community.

Conducting interviews

The interviews were conducted in Hebrew and were tape recorded and later transcribed in Hebrew. Most interviews lasted between 2-3 hours and on average I spent 15-30 minutes before switching the tape on for introductory talk; introducing the research, explaining about confidentiality matters and engaging in casual conversation. I found that these casual conversations were invaluable in forming a relaxed atmosphere and establishing rapport, which often enabled us to begin the interview with an informal and personal register.

My positioning in the research site as an 'insider' was of particular significance for the conduct of the interviews. The shared background, identity, language, my motherhood and the shared and educational experiences, contributed to the feeling of camaraderie, reduced self-consciousness and allowed for high levels of rapport and intimacy. This is demonstrated in the next episode:

We scheduled the interview to nine o'clock in the evening. When I arrived, she wasn't at home and her husband was having an argument with the children, trying to convince them to go to bed...When she arrived the children were still watching TV. She apologised and they both went with the children to their bedroom. She came back 10 minutes later and it was obvious that she was embarrassed and tensed. She kept apologising. I said it was fine, and that I don't mind waiting but that did not seem to relax her.

We started the interview with this unpleasant tension. As we started talking she gradually relaxed. But, half way through the interview her 5 year old son comes down the stairs. 'I can't sleep mummy' he says. 'why?' she asks, 'what's the matter?' 'I am hungry mummy', he says, 'daddy didn't give me anything to eat...' Obviously, she was embarrassed, and I could feel her tension level was going up again. She had a short conversation with him, prepared a drink, and escorted him to his bedroom. She came back a few minutes later and I could feel that my presence there is not something she really desired, to say the least... She apologised again...I then thought of ways to relieve the tension and decided to use my own experiences as a mother to establish a sense of communion between us. I said: 'oh my, and I thought only my children are using these strategies to make us feel guilty - now I see that your children are doing the same routines!' At first she was surprised, then we both laughed, and then we chatted for few minutes about children's 'staying out of bed' routines and strategies for making a Jewish mother feel guilty. When we continued the interview she was relaxed and chatty (Research diary, 6.5.99).

Issues of language and discourse were also of significance in the interview situation. Many parents have admitted that they feel much more and at ease when speaking Hebrew and some said they would not have agreed to take part in the research, had the interviews been conducted in English. The shared understanding of the nuances of the communication, verbal and non-verbal, indeed helped in achieving high degrees of sincerity, openness and reflexivity, enabling interviewees to share their thoughts and feelings on an intimate and personal level.

Participant observation: recording casual events

Between February 1997 and August 1999, parallel to interviewing parents, I engaged in participant observation and took records of 457 events. Most of the records (n=241) were of informal casual events in which I had taken notes of the conversations that took place among Israeli parents (sometimes with children). Most conversations involved at least two or three people in addition to myself, and occurred during informal social gatherings of various types such as: when driving children to schools, to afternoon classes and

friends, during lunch meetings or dinner parties, during children's parties, holiday celebrations, family trips and many others. These events took place in a variety of locations, for example: schools' gates or halls, private houses, coffee shops, public gardens, shopping malls, children's play areas, various Israeli and Jewish shops and in my own house.

The other (n=216) events were of a more formal nature. Some of these were directly related to the research topics and thus in these events I took records of both the event itself (often a speech, a school tour, a lecture or a ceremony), and some of the conversations that took place between Israeli parents and children. These included mainly school events such as open evenings, parents' evenings or communal events, such as holiday celebrations or public lectures. In other formal events that did not directly relate to the research topics I took records of conversations only. These included various school events, such as prize days, shows, trips, summer fairs, exam days, as well as numerous communal events and celebrations such as charity events, welcome and farewell parties, public lectures and many others. In addition, I took records of some conversations (including phone conversations) between key informants and myself during which we discussed research ideas.

Taking records of these events was not an easy task, because in most, taking notes during the event was socially inappropriate. Therefore, I had to take notes only after the event, which meant that the record was completely reliant on my hearing and memory. After trying various means of note taking, I resorted to using a Dictaphone to record my notes. The notes taken were in the language they were spoken and later transcribed accordingly.

During that period I had experienced the gradual focusing process, and as a result I ceased to record conversations that I felt were irrelevant to the research. I also experienced data saturation several times and refrained from recording topics that I felt were repetitious.

Collecting documents

Between September 1997 and February 1999, while I engaged with the school choice process, I collected a fair amount of documents. All of these documents were directly related to the school choice process. These documents included: LEAs and schools' brochures, invitation letters to open evenings and exam days, LEAs and schools' registration forms with their attached explanations and lists of requirements, league table publications, OFSTED reports, newspapers ads and articles (written about schools chosen by respondents), as well as schools', LEAs and DfES web-sites printouts. The documents were all in the public domain; none of these were personal documents.

The research diary

It would be difficult to say when exactly I began to write a research diary, for I had written some personal notes during our first year in London, and long before the research had been launched, and I continued to write these personal notes until August 2001. During the time that I was piloting the questionnaire, I wrote some methodological notes, which later led to the decision to adopt an ethnographic approach to the research. I began to write in a more organised manner when I began interviewing and taking records of casual events and this continued while I was analysing data and writing up.

The research diary was originally made of notebooks written in Hebrew and in English, a few cassettes in which I recorded myself before or after meetings or interviews, which were later transcribed, and many notes written on notepapers, paper napkins or scrap paper, which were later re-written into a computer file in Hebrew.

The diary in its various forms included two types of notes. **Research notes** in which I recorded my experiences, ideas, insights and thoughts as well as some pieces of primary writings. These notes included insights,

classifications, ideas and plans for sections, chapters, papers and the whole dissertation, and most importantly, research themes. It also included comments on some of the literature that I had read. This part of the diary documented the gradual focusing process and the shifts that I had experienced in my perception. In addition, this part also included notes of a more personal nature: reactions, expectations, intuitions, disappointments as well as other sentiments that I had experienced that were related to the conduct of the study.

The second type of notes, was of a more personal nature, and documented **my own experiences** as a mother, wife, immigrant, woman, community member, overseas research student and researcher, and detailed my family's intercultural adaptation process, including our own engagement with the educational market and schools, my personal 'culture shock' cycles, and the developments in our sense of identity and sense of home. In many of these notes I reflected on my positioning in the research field and contemplated on the ways in which my own experiences may have affected the way I engaged with the respondents.

On positions in research

To conclude this chapter I would argue that positions matter. Whether studying a familiar or unfamiliar site, being home or away, taking a position of a stranger or a friend (Powdermaker 1966), my experiences in this study have demonstrated that the researcher's positioning may have a significant effect on the practices of qualitative research and its outcomes.

My position in relation to the researched community was indeed a privileged one: I was a 'complete member' (Adler and Adler 1987), although, a newly arrived one. These aspects of my positioning – my membership role and relative newness have had a significant effect on my ability to access respondents, the type and richness of data that I was able to obtain, and the support, trust and interest that I was offered by members.

My membership role preceded my decision to conduct a research, and this facilitated entry to the field and my ability to access respondents. By the time I began data collection I was already 'in situ' (Hughes 1971) conducting my everyday life as a member of this community, interacting directly and naturalistically (Denzin 1978) with the people I studied, and experiencing firsthand many of the experiences reported on in this study. I was perceived by participants and indeed perceived myself as a member, and I related to others and they related to me as equals sharing a common set of experiences and circumstances – that of being Israeli migrants in London. Adler and Adler (1987) argue that in these situations researchers' experiences, feelings and thoughts become equally important as others' accounts.

Being an Israeli was perhaps the most significant aspect of my membership: the shared background – our homeland culture, collective history and knowledge, the shared language and discursive codes, the similarities in our religious practices and orientations, and our parallel class standing - were all significant factors in gaining access as well as establishing rapport with members. This has enabled me to conduct my research in a setting where cultural, class and linguistic barriers were minimal. Adler and Adler (1987) argue that insides are often able to gain openness to an extent that is unknown to any other type of researcher.

The second factor affecting my positioning was my relative newness. At the point of entry, I had little knowledge or links with the community and when data collection commenced my links with members were fairly limited and at their introductory stage. Being a newcomer meant that I had to acquire the most basic knowledge about this community, as well as expand my networks and develop my ties with members as any outsider researcher would. This meant that my initial knowledge and ties were less likely to engender bias at the point of entry. My newcomer status was also noted by my respondents and positioned me as a novice member, which meant that I was able to ask the most trivial questions, and was not perceived as an authority on the issues I studied (at least during the first year).

However, being a member-researcher has its own down side. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) note, researchers often progress through different roles over the course of a study. Roles may alter as both respondents and researchers undergo change. Indeed, in time, my ties with members expanded, and my knowledge of the community and various schools has accumulated. Simultaneously, information about my research was spread more widely among community members. As a result, my research function and my membership role intertwined more closely as I progressed with data collection: some of the people I befriended become my key informants, and some of my interviewees became my friends. Interviewees sometimes sought information or advice from me, and newly acquainted people seem to know about my research well before I approached them. These situations were sometimes awkward, and at times I struggled create a space for my research to arise out of my membership role and friendship ties. Adler and Adler (1987) argue that developing over-rapport and over-involvement with respondents, and becoming too closely aligned with them, can bias the researcher's perspective, to the point where researchers' may lose their analytical perspective, and accept uncritically the views of members. However, as I shall demonstrate in the findings chapters, high levels of intimacy, involvement, care and the dissemination of communal information through gossip were all central features of this community and strong features of its culture. Like me, other professionals in the community (medical doctors, SEN specialists, psychologists, estate agents, solicitors, teachers etc.) were facing similar overlaps between their professional functions and their membership roles. In a way, the blurring of boundaries I experienced in this study was mirroring life in this small, tightly-knit community.

Being aware of the ethical issues involved I made a number of decisions, which enabled me to reinstate some of the boundaries between my two roles. For example, I made a conscious attempt to collect data from as many respondents' as possible, both for triangulation purposes and in order to overcome the 'researcher's effect'. In many situations I chose purposefully to

exclude myself from the interaction taking a position of observer, or avoided voicing my own opinions. During the data analysis and when writing up I attempted to disengage from the field. I often referred information seekers to other information brokers in order to avoid affecting the phenomena I studied, and indeed repeatedly stated that I was conducting a research to ensure consent. Even so, it was sometimes necessary for me to act as a censor and editor of things I was told, that is, to separate out 'private' knowledge from 'research' knowledge.

It is often argued that the best way to gain understanding of the social world is to study the perspectives of members themselves (Blumer 1969). To do this, researchers must observe, firsthand, human life 'in situ' (Hughes 1971) by participating intensively and continuously with their respondents, but they must also maintain some kind of analytic distance – to strive to be both friend and stranger (Powdermaker 1966). Indeed, experiencing life 'in situ' in the Israeli community in London meant dealing with the blurring of boundaries that life in this community presented.

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study was mainly of qualitative nature, however, because of the amount of data that was collected, and in order to ensure accuracy when enumerating groups and subgroups of respondents, quantitative methods were also used.

Grounded theory data analysis scheme

Data analysis in this study mainly followed Strauss' (1987) and Hutchinson's (1988) guidelines for grounded theory qualitative data analysis. As is often the case in ethnographic research, here too, data analysis and data collection were intertwined and conducted in repetitive cycles of data collection - coding – interpretation.

I began to notice repetitions and patterns in the data, and to experiment with rudimentary definitions of topics, concepts and research themes, during the first weeks of the data collection. These primary ideas and themes often occurred during or after interviews or when recording casual events. While transcribing the data I highlighted these themes and made notes of these initial ideas. Following the transcription of each interview or record of casual conversation, I re-read the text and highlighted code words.

The next stage could be described in Stauss' (1987) terms as the 'open coding' stage (or 'coding level 1' in Hutchinson's (1988) terminology). At this stage I had transcripts of 17 interviews and more than 100 records of casual events, and began to search for repetitions or patterns of code words, topics or themes, by way of comparing the different transcripts. At this stage I had used the traditional 'cut and paste' method, grouping phrases, sentences and episodes taken from transcripts by various contents headings.

The units of analysis were single sentences, phrases, or paragraphs and in few cases, a single word or term. The largest unit of analysis was an episode.

This was a time-consuming task, and approximately half way through, I began to search for ways to computerise the process so that I would be able to work more efficiently and accurately. Since no qualitative data analysis software is available in Hebrew, I had to devise my own computer-assisted method. After experimenting with different log styles I decided to mark each unit of analysis numerically in the original text, and then devised a data sheet that included code words, topics, sub-topics and themes together with my interpretations and ideas ('theoretical memoing') and the identification numbers of the analysis units. The outcome was a logging system that 'compiled' under each heading and sub-heading the relevant units of analysis.

I regarded the initial themes that emerged from that first coding stage as 'primary categories'. As Hutchinson (1988) notes, these categories often lead to theoretical sampling. Following this stage I refined and focused my research questions, and decided to incorporate in the next data collection batches two populations that I have not included previously: expatriate families and communally-detached families. This was done in order to examine and substantiate the theoretical themes that have begun to emerge from the data.

The next stage of data analysis occurred when I had conducted 30 interviews and had more than 200 records of conversations and events. Strauss (1987) defines this stage as 'axial coding' (Hutchinson (1988) named it 'coding level 2'). At this stage I had added the new data into the existing coding scheme, coded in the new topics and themes that have emerged from it, but now devoted more time and thought to refine each theme and define the categories and sub-categories more accurately. Much of this stage was devoted to determine 'the rules for inclusion' (Lincoln and Guba 1985) for each headed theme. This stage continued for many months in parallel to the data collection in an effort to make the coding scheme as explicit and lucid as possible.

The third stage occurred in parallel to the previous one; that was when links and relationships between categories and themes began to transpire. Strauss (1987) argues that at this stage 'core categories' should emerge from the data leading to the formation of grounded theory. He defines 'core categories' as central themes that are evidenced recurrently, linked to other themes and categories, and have some theoretical grounding. In this study, the core categories defined at the earlier stages of the analysis, led to the configuration of the theoretical framework presented in the finding chapters of this dissertation.

Quantitative analysis of qualitative data

Quantitative data analysis was conducted only on the interview data, with one purpose in mind: ensuring accuracy. As I was writing up, I realised that each chapter required some basic, descriptive information on the interviewees, or their children, such as: their length of stay in London, residence area, parents' professions and education, religiosity, intermarriage, language spoken at home, the children's ages, the schools they attended, number of transitions between schools that they had experienced, etc.

At first I tried to calculate frequencies and other simple statistics using a calculator, but because of the sheer amount of the data (60 interviews contained details of 119 parents and 162 children) I feared that I was risking inaccuracies and decided to use SPSS software to analyse the data.

5. The Researched Community

Israeli immigrants in London: population estimates and profile

One of the main problem areas in migration studies generally is the estimation of immigrant populations. There are technical issues that make data collection difficult, and thus inaccurate, as well as more fundamental questions related to the mere definition of 'immigrant'. Gold (2002) argues that because of these complications most immigration scholars are accustomed to studying immigrant populations with imperfect data. This study is indeed no different. During the course of the study several estimates of the number of Israelis living in Britain were published (ONS 1997; Schmool and Cohen 1998; Israel Bureau of Statistics 1994; Gold 2002) or made by Israeli officials and knowledgeable informants, which ranged anywhere between 20,000 to 120,000 people. Gold (1996) argues that the number of Israeli emigrants is often exaggerated, because of the value system surrounding emigration from Israel and the negative meaning attached to this figure by Israelis.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS 1997) reported that 26,000 Israeli-born individuals were living in Britain (in 1995, when the study was conducted). This figure is fairly limited in scope since it defines 'Israelis' as those who were born in Israel, thus excluding a large proportion of the Israeli population who were born in other countries and acquired Israeli citizenship through immigration to Israel. Additionally, this definition excludes the children of Israelis who were born in Britain who are entitled to their parents' citizenship status. The ONS publication, albeit its limitations, offers a starting point for the estimation of the number of Israelis living in London.

To estimate the number of Israelis living in London two other sources of information were used in this study. The first is the Israeli consulate in

London. The consulate currently has about 15,000 'open files' in their database, each representing one household. A file is opened only when an Israeli citizen requires services offered by the consulate. However, some of these 'open files' are outdated and it is unknown how many of them are still living in Britain. Additionally, the consulate is aware that many Israelis do not register at the consulate since they do not require their services.

The second source of information used in the study was the distributors of Israeli newspapers in London. According to their combined reports about 7,000 copies of Israeli newspapers are distributed periodically in London. The distributors estimated that only 50-60% of Israelis who live in London read these newspapers. These estimates are in line with the reports made by interviewees in this study about their consumption of Israeli newspapers.

Together, the three sources of information seem to indicate that there are currently about 15,000 Israeli households in London (around 40,000-45,000 people) and about 5,000 more living outside London (around 10,000-15,000 people). Thus the Israeli immigrant population in Britain is estimated at about 50,000-60,000 people (including children).

That being said, it would be incorrect to assume that Israelis tend to settle permanently in Britain. According to the consulate figures several thousand families are either expatriates who represent Israeli governmental agencies in Britain, or representatives of commercial organisations, students, academics on sabbatical and other temporary residents who come to Britain for pre-determined periods and return at the end of their contracts. Gold's (2002) findings also indicate that significant numbers of settlers return-migrate eventually, and thus any given population estimate is time-bound and may be exaggerated due to the lack of accurate figures that distinguish between settlers and temporary sojourners and accounts of return migration.

Population profile

According to the ONS (1997), most of the Israelis in Britain live in London (around 70%) and most tend to congregate in Jewish areas. The highest number of Israelis was found in one area of the pseudonymous Westway borough where nearly 30% of the population were identified as Jews.

In terms of age profile, Israelis are a fairly young population: 18% are under 15, 22% are in the 16-29 age group, 29% are between 30-44, 20% are in the 45-59 age group, and 11% make the over 60 group. Most Israelis (60%) who reside in Britain are married with families, and 5% were divorced. According to the ONS data, Israelis are educated and highly skilled, with most (67%) having a university degree. Sixty-two percent of Israelis aged 16 or over were economically active, 11% were students, and 27% were inactive. Of those who were economically active 56% were in professional or management occupations. An analysis of employment status by gender has shown that 48% of Israeli born women were employed, compared to 76% of men. As might be expected by their education and employment profile, 98% of Israelis lived in private households (and the rest (2%) were in educational establishments).

The respondents – research categories

This section delineates the socio-economic and cultural profile of the participants who took part in the research, and the main categories into which the respondents have been divided for comparison purposes. The analysis presented here was carried out on interview data only, aiming to delineate the interviewees' and their families' backgrounds and characteristics. For this purpose, a descriptive quantitative analysis was conducted, using SPSS software. In addition, this section also gives details of the main research terms and definitions, categories and sub-groups that have been used in the data analysis.

Immigration status

One of the primary definitions any study on international immigrants has to address is the immigrant definition, that is, who was defined as immigrant for the purpose of the study, what were the criteria for inclusion in the study, and who was excluded. Many studies rely on the host country's Home Office definitions to inform their research (ONS 1997). The Office for National Statistics in Britain applies the following Home Office definition:

> A migrant into the UK is defined as a person who has resided abroad and on entering had declared the intention to reside here for a year or more (ONS 1997:7).

Contrary to the common definition of immigrants as those who wish to settle in the host society and seek membership in it, the term used for research and enumeration, as well as for immigration control purposes, includes many temporary residents, many of which have no intention of settling in Britain (Spencer 1994). According to this definition, a person visiting Britain for less than a year is clearly not an immigrant and may be more appropriately defined as a tourist or a short-term visitor. An individual who stays in Britain for a year or more - whether he is an expatriate, a diplomat or an overseas student - is an immigrant, although they may return to their homelands after a few years. A person who works in Britain every summer and then returns to his homeland for the rest of the year would be defined as a seasonal

worker. Business visitors are those who travel frequently from one country to another. Although some may have assets and interests, such as a home or a business in both countries, they are not defined as immigrants unless they stay for more than a year in Britain and their whole household changes location (Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998).

As indicated, the Home Office definition lumps together some types of sojourners (students, representatives of international companies, diplomats, academics etc.) with settlers, which may render it inaccurate for some immigration studies. However, in this study, this inclusive definition was particularly apt, since findings from this study and from those conducted on Israeli immigrants in the USA (Gold 1997; Sabar 1989; Shokeid 1993; Cohen 1989; Rosen 1993) have indicated that Israelis tend to display an overlap between the settler – sojourner categories, and that many of those who eventually settle in the new country do not arrive with such intentions in mind. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the term 'immigrant' covered both settlers and sojourners.

Although the definition applied in this study has adopted the spirit of the Home Office definition, it did not apply its time frame, and this was extended to 2 years. This is because of evidence indicating that short-term sojourners tend to treat their stay as a prolonged tourist-visit, and therefore did not experience the main immigration and educational dilemmas that others have faced. In order to avoid any borderline cases, I had considered as 'immigrants' and included among interviewees only those who had lived (or intended to live) in London for at least 2 years.

Further, the Home Office definition characterises 'trans-national migrants' (see definition below) as short-term visitors and thus excludes them from the analysis of migration patterns. In this study, a significant proportion of the researched community were recognised as trans-migrants, and were included in the analysis.

Defining the participants

Given that the study focused on education and its participants were mainly parents, the interviewees could be generally defined in the following manner:

> Israeli families who lived in the Greater London area for at least 2 years, at the time the research was conducted.

For the purpose of the study, 'Israeli families' were defined as

> Households with one or more school-aged children who were educated in Britain at the time of the study, and, where at least one parent is an Israeli citizen.

In order to distinguish between subgroups among the respondents, I had applied other categorisations and definitions, which related to their settlement plans, length of stay and citizenship status.

Settlers, sojourners and trans-migrants

The interviewees who took part in this study may be broadly divided into three groups according to their settlement patterns and future plans:

Settlers: the main group of interviewees (n=29, 48.4%) were defined as settlers. These are families who have made a conscious decision to settle in Britain. Most of them have lived in London between 10-30 years and defined as 'veteran immigrants' and by the time the interview was conducted have become integrated in the local economy and society. Although some interviewees in this group voiced a wish to return to Israel 'some day', they had no substantive plans regarding their return.

Sojourners: the second group of interviewees (n=21, 35%) are those who came to London initially for a predefined and relatively short periods (3-5 years). These are scientists and students in higher education, those working for and representing Israeli governmental agencies or private companies, or other employees on short-term contracts. These interviewees stated that

they have plans to return to Israel and were able to give a date for their return with reasonable accuracy.

This category included the following sub-categories: 5 families were titled **'representatives'** because one of the adults was sent to Britain by an Israeli or international non-governmental employer in order to represent their affairs; 6 interviewees were characterised as **'state-expatriates'**: these were families where one partner, and often both partners, were working for an Israeli State agency (such as the Israeli embassy or consulate, El-Al, etc.). These families were sent to London for periods of 3-5 years. The other families (n=10) were students and academics, self-employed businessmen and others who came to Britain for a short-term stay. Most interviewees in all sub-groups (n=19) returned to Israel at the end of their contract, and 9 interviewees had outstayed their initial plans or contract, often delaying their return from one year to the next.

Trans-national migrants: this category included interviewees (n=10, 16.7%) who own homes or businesses both in Israel and in Britain. In these families at least one of the parents (and sometime both) travel frequently and repetitively between the two countries while the rest of the family, including children, live mainly in Britain but spend at least a few months per year in Israel. Recent studies (Gold 1997; Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994) demonstrate a significant growth in this type of international migration globally. Trans-national migrants do not treat immigration as a single event involving transition from one location to another; rather, they tend to visit other countries for lengthy periods and often repetitively, setting homes or businesses in more than one country. Trans-national immigrants often establish ties in multiple settings, thus enabling the exchange of various social and material assets between these domains. The existing research on this group demonstrates that trans-national migrants themselves do not attach permanency to their moves, and often maintain their own agendas, aims, perspectives and affinities, and rather than

assimilating in one culture, seem to develop identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them to two or more nation states (Gold 2000).

Interviewees' place of birth

Most of the parents who participated in this study were born in Israel: 54 (90%) mothers, and 33 (56%) fathers were born in Israel, 20 (34%) fathers and one (2%) mother was born in Britain and 7 (12%) fathers and 5 (8%) mothers were born in other countries. The parents who were born in other countries immigrated to Israel at a young age and then immigrated to Britain as adults. In addition, the majority of the interviewees' children (n=107, 66%) were born in Israel and the rest (n=55, 34%) were born in Britain.

Generational definitions of immigration status

All the parents who took part in the study were defined as **first generation immigrants**, however, this was not a research preference, but rather a pre-determined fact given that Israel is only 55 years old and therefore the second generation growing up in Britain has not reached parenthood stage yet.

Children who were born in Israel and had accompanied their parents when they immigrated to Britain were referred to as the **'one-and-a-half generation'** (n=89 children, 55% of sample), while children who were born in Britain (n=55 children, 34%) were considered as **'second generation immigrants'**. The other children (n=17, 11%) in the research sample were over 18 years of age when their parents immigrated to London, and most have remained in Israel.

Interviewees' age upon immigration

Most of the parents were in their late twenties or early thirties at the time of arrival to London. Of the 107 children who were born in Israel, 22 (20%) arrived as toddlers, 33 (31%) attended a kindergarten in Israel, 35 (33%) children have had some schooling experiences (at the primary or secondary

level) in the Israeli educational system, and 17 (16%) were students in higher education when their parents immigrated to Britain.

The data also shows that less than 10% of the children came to London as teenagers, suggesting that immigrating with secondary school aged children is less common among Israeli families.

Citizenship status

When addressing the citizenship status of interviewees there are two dimensions to consider: their Israeli and their British citizenship. By definition, all the parents in the sample are Israeli citizens (or entitled to Israeli citizenship since they are married to Israeli citizens). Also, all the children are Israeli citizens (or entitled to Israeli citizenship) for according to the Israeli citizenship laws, children can acquire their parents' citizenship status even if they do not live in Israel.

About two thirds (n=37, 62%) of the interviewees' and their families are British citizens (or entitled to it). These interviewees and their offspring may be classified as '**multiple citizenship families**' since they own both Israeli and British citizenship. Among this group 7 parents also have other (mostly European) citizenship rights.

The other families (n=23, 38%), classified as '**residents',** do not own British citizenship, and have been able to stay in Britain under the provision of temporary or permanent resident permit. Among this group, 5 families also have other (East European or USA) citizenship rights.

Although 55 children (34%) were born in Britain, they were not granted citizenship rights, since according to British immigration laws, citizenship is not granted by birth. Thus, all children whose parents' immigrated to Britain before they turned 18 have been granted the same legal status as their parents.

It should be noted here that apart from 21 families where one parent was a British born citizen, all other 39 families required specific permits to work or settle in Britain. Most families have acquired entry and residence permits through the work permit scheme.

An analysis of the interviewees' status in terms of their British citizenship, by their settlement status has shown that most settlers (n=26, 100%) in the sample have acquired British citizenship, as well as most trans-nationals (n=8 out of 10, 80%). However, most sojourners (n=15, 71%)) were residents and were not granted citizenship rights in Britain by the time the interview was conducted.

Gold (2000) argues that today's immigrants often acquire citizenship status with relative ease, and use it for different objective than the settlers of earlier periods. While researchers have typically regarded naturalisation to be an indicator of loyalty to a nation, trans-national migrants occasionally seek citizenship status as a means of facilitating their access to other societies or resources. For example, those who own a British passport may find that travelling in Europe becomes much easier than if one owns a non-European passport. In contrast, a less transient migrant has far less incentive to attain citizenship.

Length of stay in London: newcomers and veterans

The interviewees who took part in this study may be broadly divided into two groups according to their length of stay in London:

Newcomers: those who have been living in London for a period of less than three years have been defined as newcomers. This category included less than one quarter of interviewees (n=17, 28%). The average length of stay for this group was 2 years.

Veteran immigrants: this group included all other families whose length of stay in London ranged between 4-27 years. This group included the

majority of interviewees (n=43, 72%). On average these families have lived in London for 12 years (STD=6).

The time reference given here (three years) as the divider between newcomers and veterans was based on some accounts where parents noted the changes that have occurred in their perceptions of 'home' and sense of comfort during their third year:

> *Ruth: I feel great here now. The hurdles and difficulties that I experienced during the first two years, that hampered my communication and crushed my confidence – that is all gone now! I do have some close friends here now and I have even grown little roots here (Casual conversation no. 399).*
>
> *Dana: It's our third year now, and it's the best we had yet. This year I really feel good here. I feel at home (Casual conversation no. 123).*

Based on these accounts it was decided that those who stayed for less than 3 years would be defined as 'newcomers'.

Reasons for migration

Most of the interviewees (n=42, 70%) came to Britain following work opportunities. However, only few were unemployed prior to their immigration and in most cases, the opportunity to work abroad was offered to them by their current employer or colleague rather than sought by interviewees. Eight families (13%) came originally to further their education or training, 5 (9%) interviewees came at a relatively younger age for a leisure trip during which they either met their partner and decided to stay or were offered work. A minority (4, 6%) left Israel because of personal reasons (personal tragedies, familial conflicts etc.), and only one family (2%) declared that their push factors were much stronger than their pull factors and they had left Israel because they did not want to live there.

Thus, the Israeli migration to London may be seen as economic migration, rather than ideological. However, it should be noted here that none of the

interviewees who took part in this study have immigrated during the current Palestinian Intifada[1].

Return migration

Although most of the interviewees in this study have been living in Britain for substantial periods, 26 families (40%) expressed their intention to return migrate to Israel at some point, and were therefore defined as '**potential returnees**'. Most of these families (n=22, 37%) have had definite plans to return at the time of the interview, and 19 families have indeed returned to Israel approximately a year or two after the interview was conducted (although one has immigrated to the USA, and 3 families have returned to Israel and few years later re-immigrated back to London). These families were defined as '**returnees'.** As might be expected, the proportion of potential returnees and returnees was significantly higher among sojourners, trans-nationals and newcomers than among settlers and veterans.

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1 Since the Intifada began, some newcomers claimed that ideological reasons were significant push factor (disagreement with State policies), often in addition to high levels of stress, fear, and feeling of despair with regard to the situation.

The respondents' demographic and socio-economic profile

The research site – geographic location

Most of the families who took part in the study (44 families 73%) live in the borough of Westway in North West London. These families reside in three particular and adjacent wards in the borough, all of which have a relatively high percentage of Jewish population. For the purpose of this study the three wards were treated as one 'communal' or 'ethnic' area and titled '**Hill View Gardens'.**

The area was defined as 'the communal area' both because of the high concentration of Israeli families living in this area, and mainly since respondents themselves seem to perceive and define the area as such, often naming it 'the Israeli zone' or 'the ghetto', or using a short version of its full name ('The Hill') to demonstrate ownership and their sense of belonging to it.

As detailed in the previous sections, the last stage of the data collection was devoted to locating families who were detached from the community and who lived outside the communal area. This group included 11 families (18% of interviewees). Among this group a high proportion (n=9, 81%) were intermarried families, where one parent was an Israeli and the other British. Most of these interviewees explained that their non-Israeli partner preferred to live where he/she grew up or near their original family and thus chose to reside outside the communal area.

Dwelling

Most of the families in this study (n=40, 66%) lived in semi-detached houses, 12 (20%) in detached houses, 4 (7%) in terraced houses and 4 (7%) in flats. Most families (n=44, 73%) owned their homes, and a minority, mostly newcomers (n=16, 27%) were privately renting the homes in which they

lived. These findings suggest that the interviewees were relatively stable in terms of their economic situation.

Marital status

Of the sixty families who took part in the research, 49 (82%) interviewees were married, 5 (8%) parents were divorced and raised their children as single parents, and 6 (10%) were divorced or widowed, have re-married (some more than once) and functioned as step parents to children from previous relationships.

As noted earlier, 21 parents were born and raised in Britain, however, for research purposes, only 15 families in this study were considered as '**intermarriage families'** (two of which were divorced). This title was not applicable to 8 families where the British born parents lived in Israel for considerable periods and defined themselves as 'Israelis'; thus the parents themselves did not consider their marriage as 'intermarriage'.

Among the 15 intermarried families, in 11 families the non-Israeli partner was Jewish, and in 4 families the partner (or ex-partner) was non-Jewish and therefore these families were defined as '**interfaith families'.**

Religious orientation

All the mothers who took part in the study were Jewish. Four of them were married to Christian men, and the other fathers were Jewish (n=56). Since Judaism is passed down to children by the mother, all the children in this study were considered Jewish. This is a significant factor in this study as it means that all the children in this study were eligible to study at Jewish schools.

In terms of religious practices, most of the parents in this study, including the interfaith families, defined their religious orientation as **'secular'** (n=48, 80%). In terms of religious practices these families did not observe most of

the Jewish religious practices: they did not observe Kashrut food laws, did not attend a synagogue regularly and were often unfamiliar with the religious customs of Judaism. Nevertheless, most of these families celebrated the Jewish holidays in a secular manner. The **'two-faith families'** (n=2, 3%) tended to celebrate the main Jewish holidays together with the main Christian holidays.

Ten families (17%) in this study perceived themselves as **'moderately religious' (Masorati).** These families observed some religious practices regularly (such as Kashrut food laws), and attended a synagogue during the main holidays. Most of them were affiliated to a certain synagogue in their locality and paid regular membership fees.

Two (3%) families in this study were **'orthodox'** in their religious orientation. These families conducted a particular life style, which revolved around and was strongly linked to their religious customs and beliefs: they were members of a synagogue which they attended at least once a week, and often on a daily basis, and they observed a wide array of religious laws and customs, and chose to live near other families who share their orientation.

Embeddedness

In order to assess the extent to which families were embedded within the Israeli community in London, a measure of embeddedness was used in this study. This was based on the interviewees' reports as to their own level of involvement in the ethnic community and sense of belonging to it. According to this measure families were divided into two categories and defined as '**embedded**', or '**detached**'.

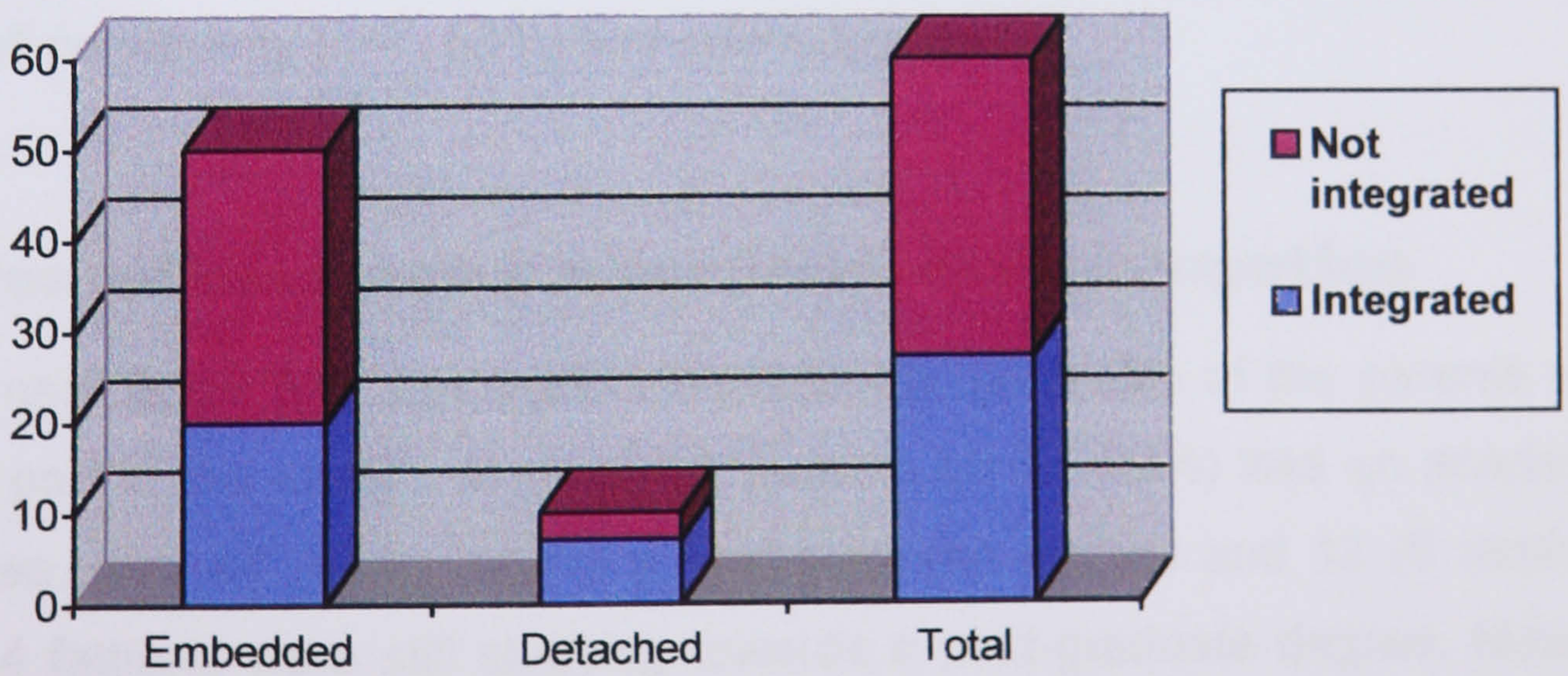
The statistical analysis conducted on this variable shows that most of the participating families (n=50, 83%) were embedded in the community and 10 (17%) were detached from communal life. The findings also indicate that of the 10 detached families, 7 were intermarried.

Integration in the host society

In order to evaluate the extent to which families have become integrated in the general society, interviewees have been asked to assess their own level of integration. Most interviewees have used their ties (professional and social), together with their level of knowledge and interest in local and national affairs and their sense of belonging to London as the criteria to assess their integration. According to the parents' reports, families were divided into two categories and defined as **'integrated'** or **'not integrated'**.

The statistical analysis conducted on this variable shows that most of the participating families (n=33, 55%) were not integrated, and the others (27, 45%) were integrated. The findings also indicate that of the 27 integrated families, 6 were intermarried. Additionally, the data reveals that veterans tend to be more integrated than newcomers: 5 out of the 17 (30%) newcomers were integrated, compared to 22 out of 43 (51%) veterans.

Chart no. 1: Families' embeddedness by degree of integration



An analysis of the relationship between the intra-ethnic embeddedness of the families and their intercultural integration (chart no. 1) has shown that the majority of families (n=30 out of 50, 60%) who were embedded in the ethnic community were not integrated in the general society, and of those who

detach themselves from the ethnic community, most (n=7 out of 10, 70%) were integrated in the host society.

Links with the Jewish community

One of the intriguing questions in this study relates to the links that Israeli emigrants forge with their proximate hosts – the local Jewish community. The data suggests that similar to the pattern found in the USA (Gold 1997; Rosen 1993) most of the **secular and embedded** interviewees (n=47, 68%) whether newcomers or veterans, settlers or sojourners, did not forge strong ties with Jews or with Jewish organisations, although most lived in close proximity. It seems that both the presence of an Israeli community in their lives and their embeddedness in it, together with their secular outlook has occasioned a situation where their ties with Jews, where these existed, were confined to formal settings (work or school), and did not develop into more meaningful ties. In contrast, both the **'moderately religious'** and the **'orthodox'** families (n=13) were in closer contact with the Jewish community due to their synagogue attendance and the majority (n=8, 61%) reported that they had strong ties with other Jewish families and with Jewish organisations. However, most of these families were detached from the Israeli community (n=7, 53%) and intermarried.

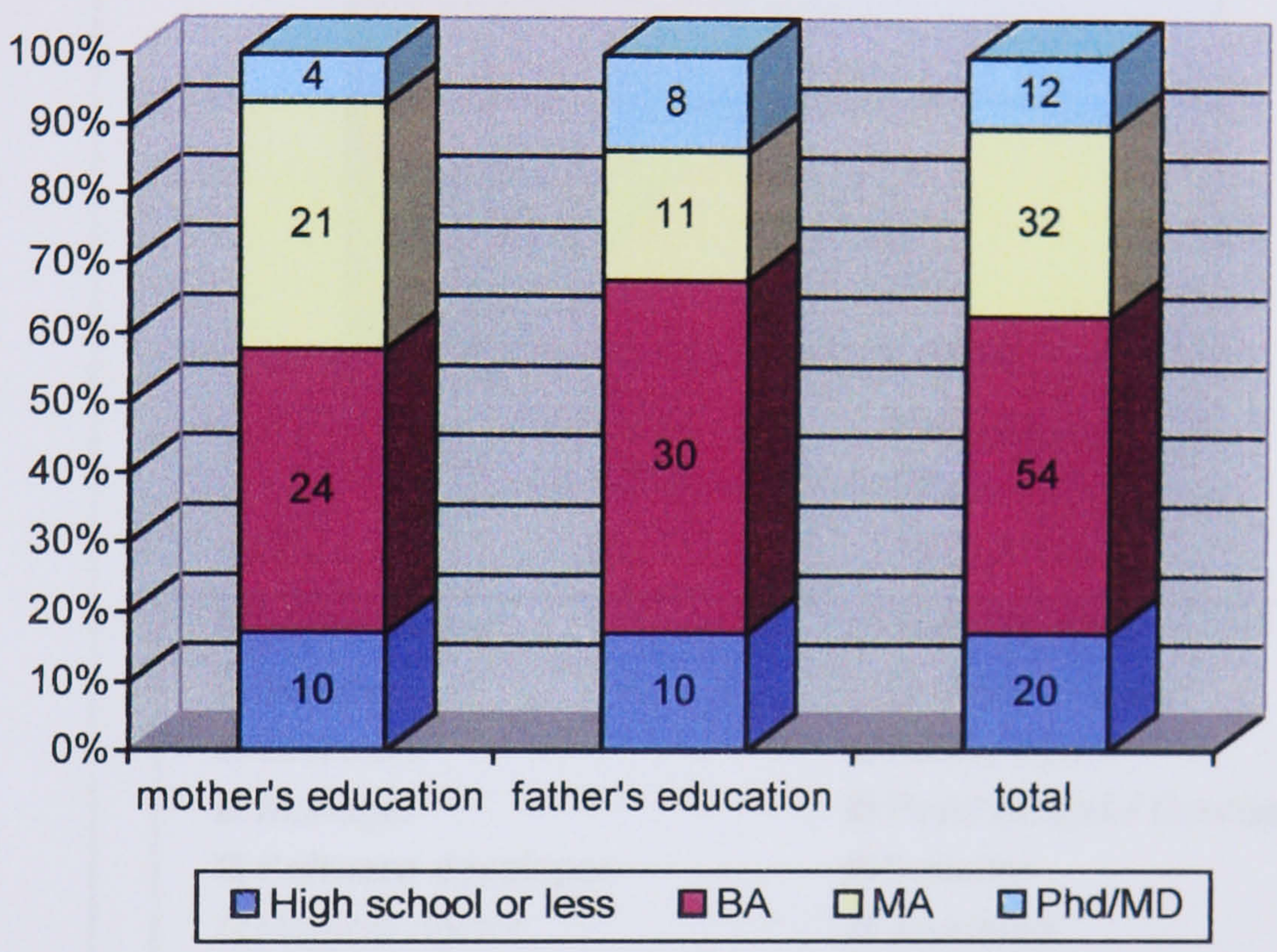
Parental resources: education and occupation

The next figure (no .2) presents the educational profile of the parents who took part in the study. Most of the parents (n=98, 82%) had an academic degree, with 44 (37%) having a post-graduate degree and 12 (8 mothers and 4 fathers) were still studying towards a post-graduate degree. Most of the parents acquired their academic credentials in Israel.

Most of the mothers who took part in the study have acquired skills and qualifications and were employed in Israel prior to their arrival. There were eight mothers among interviewees who immigrated to London at a relatively young age (18-23) and did not have the opportunity to work or acquire

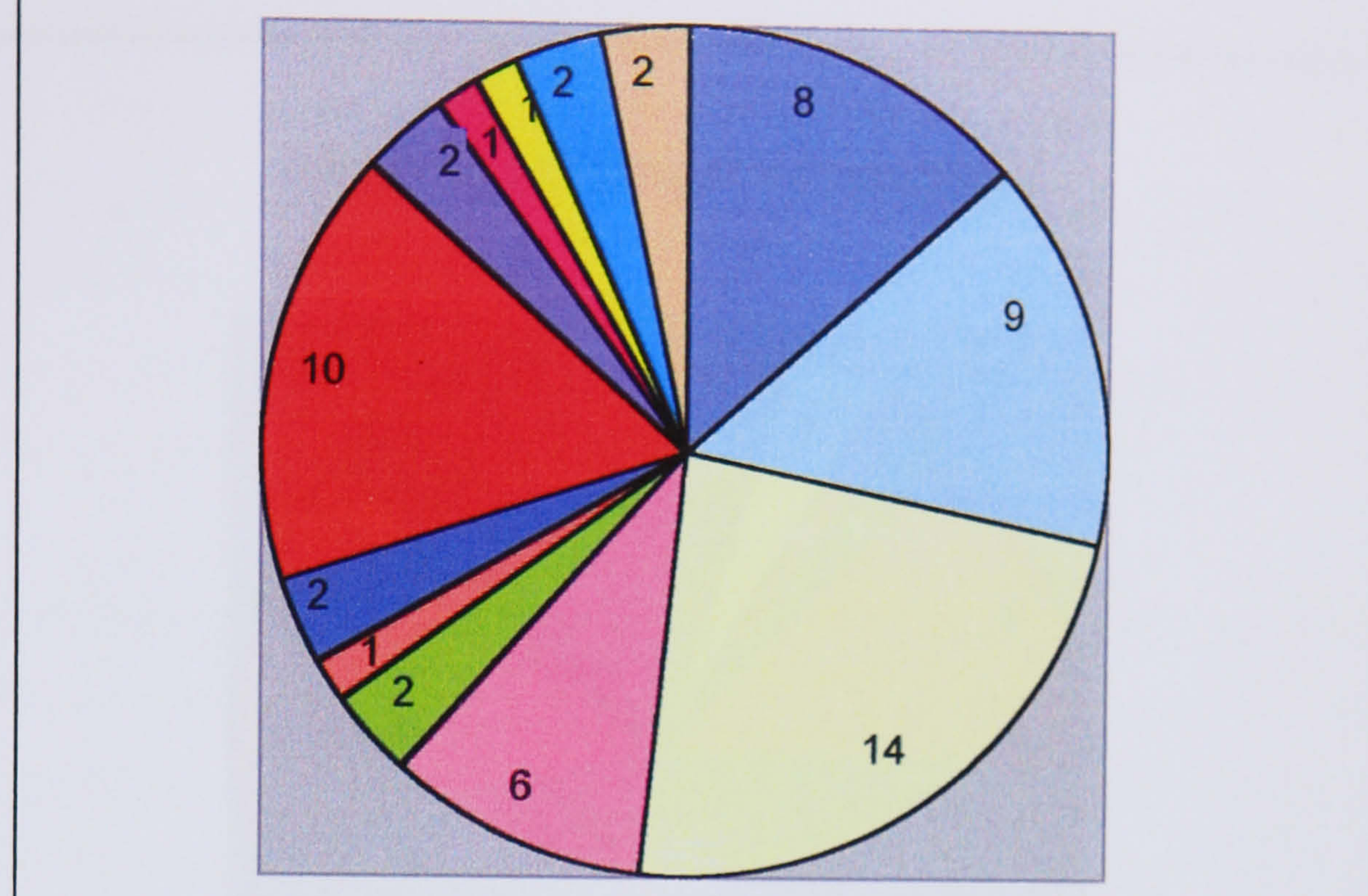
qualifications while in Israel. As chart no. 3 shows, these mothers defined their occupation as 'mothers' or 'homemakers'. The chart also demonstrates that the most popular occupation among the mothers who took part in this study was teaching: almost a quarter of the mothers (n=14) were qualified teachers.

Chart no. 2: Parents' education



A similar analysis of the fathers' occupation (chart no. 4) suggests that most of the fathers (n=42, 71%) were professionals, managers or businessmen, and many were involved in the Information Technology industry and in property development. The findings suggest that the fathers in this study were better equipped than their wives in terms of their skills, educational credentials and experience to compete in the British job market. This is because Britain has experienced a significant shortage in IT personnel and Business managers. The structure of the IT employment market has become the domain of contractors in Britain, making it difficult for companies to find workers and maintain them for long periods. It has thus become more cost effective to 'import' employees from other countries. As this sample of interviewees demonstrates, Israel was one of the 'suppliers' of IT personnel.

Chart no. 3: Mothers' occupations

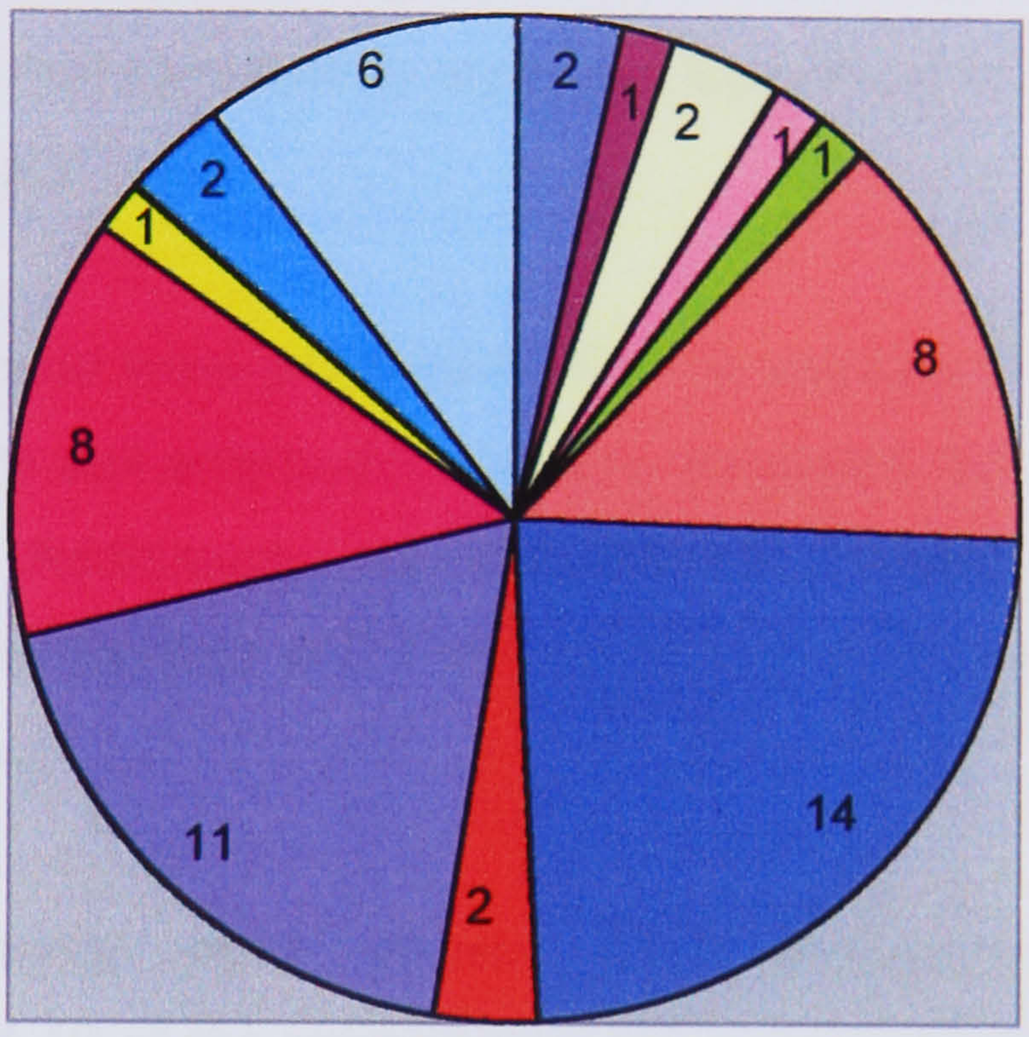


Although there has been a shortage in teachers and head teachers across Britain during the past years, most of the qualified teachers who took part in this study were not able to work full-time in their profession since they came to London. In fact, only few Hebrew teachers (5) were employed full-time in their profession.

An analysis of the interviewees' employment situation reveals that 50 fathers (85%) were employed mostly in their profession at the time of the interview, 4 were studying full-time and 2 were working part-time. The data also reveals that 25 (42%) fathers were self-employed establishing their own businesses in London. Among the 25 self-employed men, 9 became self-employed only after their immigration to London. Among the 25 employed

fathers 13 (52%) were working for a Jewish or Israeli employer and 12 were employed by a non-Jewish employer.

Chart no. 4: Fathers' occupations



Apart from those who were specifically sent to London by governmental or privately owned Israeli companies (n=6), few who were involved in the IT industry (n=2), students or academics (n=3) most of the other fathers who took part in this study (37, 63%) experienced a post-migration occupational regression which resulted in temporary set backs and periods of unemployment. As a result, some have had to take jobs for which they were over-qualified and some (n=9) decided to establish their own businesses and became self-employed.

The employment situation for women was somewhat different from that of the men: some (n=9) of them were unemployed and became homemakers since their migration, one was volunteering on a regular basis and 8 were students in higher education. Most of the mothers-students were not in full time education and 5 student-mothers admitted the purpose of their studies was to keep them occupied. Of the women who were unemployed or students, less than half expected to work at a later stage in their lives ('when the children grow up').

Of the 42 mothers who were employed, 30 were working in their profession, but 15 of them were self-employed: 10 were employed full-time and 5 were working part-time. Additionally, 12 mothers were employed not in their profession (5 worked full-time and 7 part-time) and were overqualified for the jobs they were doing.

Similar to the men, most women have experienced periods of unemployment, and 10 of the women became self-employed only after their immigration to London. Another defining feature of mother's work were their employers: 28 (47%) were employed by Israeli or Jewish employers and only 7 (12%) were employed by a non-Jewish employer.

The data thus suggest that albeit their educational resources and skills, both men and women in this study experienced a regression in their professional status as a result of their immigration to London. However, the data shows that men were more likely to recover from these setbacks often by turning to self-employment, while women were less likely to recover from the occupational regression they had experienced.

Ethnic origin

Israeli society is stratified along lines of ethnicity, which, during the past 50 years, have become entangled with class, religiosity and ideological divisions (Adler 1995). The main division in the Israeli society has been

between those of Middle-Eastern and North-African ancestry – Mizrahim (now making about 60% of Israeli population), and those of European ancestry - Ashkenazim. According to the recent statistics published by the Israeli Government Office of Statistics (2004) the new generations of Israeli born of Middle-Eastern and North-African ancestry still dominate the working class and the unemployed, are relatively observant in terms of their religiosity, and tend to be right wing in their political ideology, while those of European ancestry, are less represented among the working class, tend to be secular in their religious orientation, and left wing in their ideological orientation. The statistics also demonstrate that both groups are equally represented among the middle class.

Since no data is available on the ethnic ancestry of Israeli immigrants residing in Britain, it would be difficult to conclude whether the Israeli community in Britain / London as a whole mirrors the ethnic divisions of the homeland. In this study 19 parents (16%) stated their ancestral ethnicity as Mizrahim (Middle-Eastern – North-African), while the rest stated their ancestry as Ashkenazim (European - including parents born in Britain). However, given that most interviewees were middle-class, these ethnic affiliations had little meaning in the interviewees' lives and little effect on their educational patterns.

6. The Schools : Communal Patterns

This chapter describes the schools the interviewees' children have attended since their arrival to Britain and the pattern of schooling observed among participants, thereby laying the groundwork for the forthcoming analyses of the school choice process. The chapter opens with an explanation of the research methodology applied in this study for documenting the schooling patterns of the participants' children, and this is followed by a brief description of the schools and nurseries the participants' children have attended and the definitions used for different types of schools. The last section presents the general pattern of schooling of all families who took part in the study and compares the schooling patterns of the main subgroups.

Research methodology

This research may be generally associated with a particular group of school choice studies, that examine the ways in which educational policies are interpreted and applied by their users, and probe into the process of choice from the choosers' perspective (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1995; Carroll and Walford 1997; Gorard 1997; Adler, Petch and Tweedie 1989; Woods, Bagley and Glatter 1998). While the current study follows these school choice studies in terms of its aims, research agenda and contents, it differs from the majority of these studies in its methodology, particularly that used for documenting the schooling patterns of participants and school choice processes.

Documenting the schooling patterns of children longitudinally: most school choice studies tend to confine their research to a particular stage of education, and to one specific decision-making juncture, therefore providing a 'snapshot' of the researched families, at a

particular stage of their educational journey and with specific reference to one child in the family and his or her educational biography.

In this study I chose to apply a different approach for documenting the families' educational patterns and choice processes: the details of the chosen schools and choice processes were not confined to a particular stage of education; instead, I had documented the entire educational route of all children (n=162) whose parents were interviewed, from nursery age and up to the educational level they were enrolled in at the time the interview was conducted. The data thus include records of all the schools the children have attended and all transfers between schools. Additionally, the interviewees were asked to recount and ponder more thoroughly into two junctures where the choice of primary or secondary school was decided: their first choice of schools upon (or since) their immigration to London, and the most recent school choice process the family had experienced.

The rationale behind this approach derived from migration research, and more specifically, studies of the Intercultural Adaptation Process (Oberg 1960; Adler 1987; Grinberg and Grinberg 1989; Kim 1995), that detail the process of immigrants' adjustment to the host country, and the ways in which this process affects migrants' engagement with their new surroundings. Studying the ways in which immigrant families engage with the education market in their localities, thus required a methodology that would enable a longitudinal or developmental approach for documenting the educational experiences of respondents over a long period, and against the background of their learning and adaptation process. For this reason, the snapshot approach used in other school choice studies was considered unsuitable for this study.

Recording a communal pattern of schooling: most studies limit their research arena to families with children enrolled in certain schools. The chosen schools are often located in a predefined geographical area in an attempt to capture a comprehensive view of a localised educational market.

The focus on a particular geographically inscribed educational market is one of the central features of these school choice studies, because it enables an analysis of the operation of that particular market with its competing schools and clientele. At the same time, it provides the means to analyse and compare choosers who reside in the predefined area and therefore face (more or less) similar options in the educational marketplace.

This study required a different approach: given that the research proposed to document the schooling patterns of a minority community, the schooling arena in this study was circumscribed by the participants' educational landscapes of choice – the options they have considered and subsequent enrolment - rather than a predefined research setting. As a result, the geographical schooling arena in this study was relatively large, spreading across several LEAs, from central London to Hertfordshire. It should be noted, however, that this geographical area is a 'composite' educational site that maps a communal pattern, but as a whole has no significance in market terms, that is, this area cannot be regarded as one educational marketplace, and should be seen more aptly as an aggregate of many personal landscapes of choice and many localised educational markets.

Comparing choosers: the majority of school choice studies seek respondents from a variety of backgrounds who reside in the researched area or attend the pre-selected schools. This methodology enables researchers to analyse the differences between those who own dissimilar material, cultural or social capitals as they engage with a similar marketplace. Few studies (Wells 1996) attempt to portray the choice process and schooling patterns of an entire community.

This study adheres to the latter category: the people described here share a cultural identity, a language and a religion: they are Israelis, Hebrew speakers and Jewish. They also share the same social position within the British context: they are immigrants. However, they differ in many other aspects, including their residential and educational arrangements, marital

and citizenship status and more. These internal differences were recorded and analysed in order to allow for comparisons between subgroups. The shared cultural and symbolic characteristics of the respondents provide a useful framework for this study: it enables the exploration of the cultural and symbolic sphere within which educational decisions and experiences occur. As noted earlier, the school choice process was considered in this study a key event through which the researched culture could be revealed. Thus, the study locates educational processes within the context of the lives of these families as immigrants, highlighting their culture, and the developments that occurred in their positioning in both the host culture and their homeland culture.

Beyond the choice process: the majority of school choice studies discussed above portray the process of educational choice from the families' perspectives, analysing the choosers' position in the marketplace and the significance of their material, cultural, social and symbolic capitals in this process. Most of these studies also conclude at this point. This dissertation, however, goes beyond the process and the discussion of educational access, to explore some of the outcomes of the choice process, focusing on the group's pattern of schooling, and how segregation in education might affect the families' inclination to integrate in the host society, their embeddedness in the ethnic community and the children's identities.

As a result of the methodology described here, large amounts of factual data became available, and as explained earlier, this data was coded into an SPSS file and analysed statistically. Much of the information presented in the following sections derived from these statistical analyses.

School enrolment

During the period of the study the families who took part in the study had 162 children in total: 91 girls and 71 boys (mean=2.7 children). Of the 162 children whose details were recorded 141 children (87%) were educated in London at nursery, primary or secondary level. The others, 19 children, included 2 babies and 17 mature children (aged 19+) most of which did not accompany their parents to Britain when they immigrated and therefore their educational route was not documented.

The children who were educated in London (n=141), were enrolled in 23 nurseries, 30 primary schools, 20 secondary schools, and 15 sixth-form colleges; altogether 88 institutions.

School transfers

Since their arrival to Britain the children (n=141) have experienced 409 transfers between schools: 110 transfers occurred upon arrival to London and considered as **international transfers**; 235 were **compulsory transfers**, which occurred as they progressed from one stage of education to the next. The third type of transition was voluntary **transfers** (n=64) where parents and children chose to leave one school for another.

The children's transfers were also defined according to the choosers' length of stay in London: 110 transfers were carried out upon the families' relocation by international **choosers**; most of these transfers were to nurseries or primary schools, reflecting the age of the children at the point of relocation. In addition, 122 transfers were conducted by **newcomer choosers** and took place during the first three years of their stay in London; most of these transfers were to primary or secondary schools. Lastly, 177 transfers were conducted by **veteran choosers** between 5-10 years after their migration; these were mostly to secondary schools and sixth-form colleges.

Nearly 50% of the interviewees' children (n=76) experienced transfers to secondary schools (n=105) or colleges (n=55) in London, and this was often the most recent transition that families have experienced and reported on in interviews. As a result, much of the data collected in this study has centred on this particular choice of school and stage of education.

In what follows, the nurseries and schools the children have attended will be presented, together with the number of children who attended them over the years. Please note that the unit of analysis used here is the number of transfers the children have experienced.

Pre-school education

An analysis of all pre-school enrolments has shown that 75 children were enrolled over the years in 23 institutions.

Nurseries and kindergartens: the term **nursery** was used in this study to describe 7 pre-school organisations who operate on a **part-time basis**, while the term **kindergarten** was applied for 16 organisations operating on **a full time basis**. According to the data, 63 children have attended kindergartens and only 12 attended nurseries.

Attached and unattached institutions: another feature of pre-schools were whether they were attached to schools, thus ensuring the child's transition to the school, or unattached organisations. Of the 23 pre-school institutions 7 were attached to schools and 16 were unattached organisations. Accordingly, most children (n=60) have been enrolled in unattached organisations, and 15 attended attached organisations and continued to attend these schools in their primary years.

State-maintained and independent institutions: most (n=17) of the pre-school institutions were independent fee-paying institutions, and 64 children attended these. The other children (n=11) were enrolled in 6 LEA nurseries, all of which were attached to schools.

Non-denominational and denominational schools: the interviewees' children have attended three types of nurseries or kindergartens: 34 children were enrolled in 5 Israeli **kindergartens.** These are privately run small-scale kindergartens, each accommodating around 10-15 children, most of which are Israeli. The teachers are Israeli qualified nursery teachers, and the languages spoken in them are English and Hebrew. The curriculum taught in these kindergartens is that taught in Jewish kindergartens (see next). In terms of religious observance these kindergartens may be defined as secular. In addition, 26 children attended 10 **Jewish kindergartens** and nurseries. Of the 10 organisations, 6 kindergartens were provided by synagogues and were fee-paying, 2 nurseries were attached to Jewish LEA VA schools, and 2 kindergartens were attached to independent Jewish schools. The curriculum taught in these organisations is provided by a DfES approved Jewish agency. In terms of religious observance most of these organisations were defined as 'mainstream' institutions, which means that they are 'middle of the road' in their religiosity. The last category includes 8 **non-denominational** pre-school institutions, 4 of which were attached to LEA schools, and 4 were unattached fee-paying kindergartens. Over the years, 15 children have attended these organisations.

Community schools and others: perhaps the most central categorisation in this study is that of **community schools:** those most often chosen by Israeli parents, and in which the number of Israeli children enrolled is significant (between 25% and up to 100%). At the pre-school stage, 50 children (66%) attended 9 kindergartens and nurseries, which were identified as **community-organisations**, and 25 (34%) children were enrolled in 14 **non-communal** institutions. The communal institutions included 5 Israeli independent kindergartens, 2 independent Jewish institutions, one LEA non-denominational attached nursery, and one non-denominational fee-paying kindergarten. All communal institutions were located in the communal area (Hill View Gardens).

Primary schools

Over the years, the 141 children who were educated in London have made 174 transfers to 30 primary schools in London. These transfers were not only from nurseries to primary schools but also from one primary school to another (voluntary transfers).

State-maintained and independent institutions: half (n=15) of the primary schools were fee-paying institutions, and 58 children attended these. The majority of the interviewees' children (n=116) were enrolled in 15 LEA schools, of which 5 were Jewish VA schools.

Non-denominational and denominational schools: the interviewees' children attended three types of primary school: 59 children were enrolled over the years in 10 **Jewish schools,** 5 of which were LEA VA schools, and the rest were independent. The Jewish schools mentioned by interviewees differed in their level of observance and were classified in the following manner, from the most observant to the least observant: **Strictly Orthodox** (n=2 schools), **Mainstream Orthodox** (n=7 schools) and **Progressive schools** (n=1). Please note that there are no Israeli primary schools available in London and that no Jewish school is considered secular in a way that would match the level of observance of the secular families. The second category includes 20 **non-denominational** primary schools, and the interviewees' children have made 112 transfers to such schools. Of these schools 9 were LEA schools, and 9 were independent schools. The last category includes two **Catholic schools** (one LEA VA and one independent) and in these schools 3 children enrolled.

Community schools and others: as explained earlier **community schools** (also titled **'mag-net' schools**) are those most popular among Israeli families, and in which the number of Israeli children enrolled is significant (between 10% and up to 50% of the schools' intake). At the primary level, 116 children have transferred to 5 primary schools, which were identified as **community organisations**, and 58 children have transferred to

25 **non-communal** institutions. The communal institutions included 2 Jewish schools (both independent at the time), and 3 LEA non-denominational schools. All of these institutions were located in Hill View Gardens.

During the time the study was conducted changes began to take place in the communal category as one of the Jewish primary independent schools (that prioritised children of state-expatriates) became Grant-Maintained and later became a VA LEA school. As a result, it has had to apply the LEA's admission criteria, which prioritised local residents, and gradually the number of Israeli children in the school was reduced to the point it could no longer be defined as a communal school. In addition, one of the LEA's community schools has seen a change in its intake as a result of influx of asylum seekers who resided in its catchment area and concomitant OFSTED inspections which indicated that the school was experiencing difficulties in handling such high proportion of pupils (more than 50%) with English as a second language. This has had a knock-on effect with respect to the schools' middle-class parents (including Israeli families) who turned to other schools in the area. Both changes have affected the intake of other schools in the area and particularly those already popular among participants, and one of them has been recognised as an emerging community school towards the later stage of the data collection and was included in the above count. Currently, two other Jewish schools are emerging as community favourites.

This suggests that the community's tendency to congregate in certain 'community schools' is not a fixed and stable phenomenon, and thus the mapping and categorisation presented above is time-bound. The chronicle detailed above suggests that the tendency of the respondents to convene in certain schools is dependent upon and reactive to changes that occur in the schools and in the area, some of which may be a direct result of DfES or LEAs policies. Also, as can be seen in the case of the asylum seekers discussed above, the inclination of minority ethnic groups to gather in certain schools is not unique to Israelis, with each group affecting the educational decisions of others. The transient nature of this phenomenon makes the

choice process more challenging for Israeli parents, who need to become aware of these changes if they wish to enrol their children in schools with high percentage of Israeli children.

Secondary schools and colleges

Since their arrival to London, the 141 children who were educated in London have made 105 transfers to 20 secondary schools and 55 transfers to 15 sixth-form colleges. As previously noted, these transfers were not only from primary to secondary schools or from secondary schools to colleges, but also between secondary schools or between various colleges.

State-maintained and independent institutions: of the secondary schools reported 12 were independent institutions, and 32 children attended these. Most of the interviewees' children (n=73) were enrolled in 8 LEA schools, of which 3 were Jewish VA schools. As to college enrolment, 20 youngsters were enrolled in 8 fee-paying schools, while 35 attended 7 LEA sixth-form colleges, 3 of which were Jewish.

Non-denominational and denominational schools: the interviewees' children have attended two types of secondary schools: non-denominational or Jewish. Over the years, 73 children were enrolled in 5 **Jewish schools,** 3 of which were LEA VA schools, and the rest were independent. The Jewish schools differed in their level of observance and at the secondary level they were recognised as **Strictly Orthodox** (n=2 schools) or **Mainstream Orthodox** (n=3 schools). The second category included 15 **non-denominational** secondary schools, and the interviewees' children have made 32 transfers to these schools. Of these, 5 schools were LEA schools, and 10 were fee-paying schools.

At the college level, 29 students have enrolled in 4 Jewish schools, while the other 26 students attended 11 non-denominational schools. It should be noted, that the consulate has established an **Israeli High School** that prepares youngsters to the Israeli Baccalaureate examinations. The small-

scale college has about 10-15 children altogether, and is a fee-paying school. None of the interviewees' children enrolled in this college because it had targeted specifically families whose children arrived to Britain at college age.

Selective and comprehensive schools: most of the secondary schools (14 out of 20) were **selective** schools, however, in terms of enrolment, 40 students (38%) enrolled in these schools. The majority of children (n=65, 62%) attended 6 **comprehensive** schools, of which 5 were LEA maintained.

However, all 15 sixth-form colleges were selective and accepted only students who had completed their GCSE exams successfully. This has presented problems to children whose parents immigrated to Britain at that stage of their education, as they were unable to access these colleges because they did not sit the GCSE exams. As noted earlier, an Israeli college has been established in order to address the needs of these young migrants.

Community schools and others: community schools at the secondary level included only two schools, both of which were Jewish, and in which the number of Israeli children enrolled ranged between 10% and up to 20%. In terms of enrolment, 59 children (56%) have transferred to these **secondary community schools**, and 46 children (44%) have transferred to 18 **non-communal** institutions. Both communal schools were located outside Hill View Gardens, and required a relatively long daily ride.

Prior to the period of the study changes had taken place in the communal category since a non-denominational LEA school which used to take a significant number of Israeli children over the years, has lost its popularity among parents and children, mainly as a result of rumours relating to bullying circulated among community members. Consequently, by the time the research had begun only few Israeli children were enrolled in the school.

This affected the intake of the other community schools and one of them has become highly oversubscribed and thus unable to accommodate all children who applied. This has affected yet another Jewish school that was not recorded as a community school at the time, but is currently emerging as the popular 'default option' school.

At the college level, three schools were recognised as popular among Israeli children (2 Jewish schools and one non-denominational) and over the years 30 students took their A-level exams through these schools, while the other 25 students attended 12 non-communal schools.

Patterns of Schooling: on ethnicity and segregation

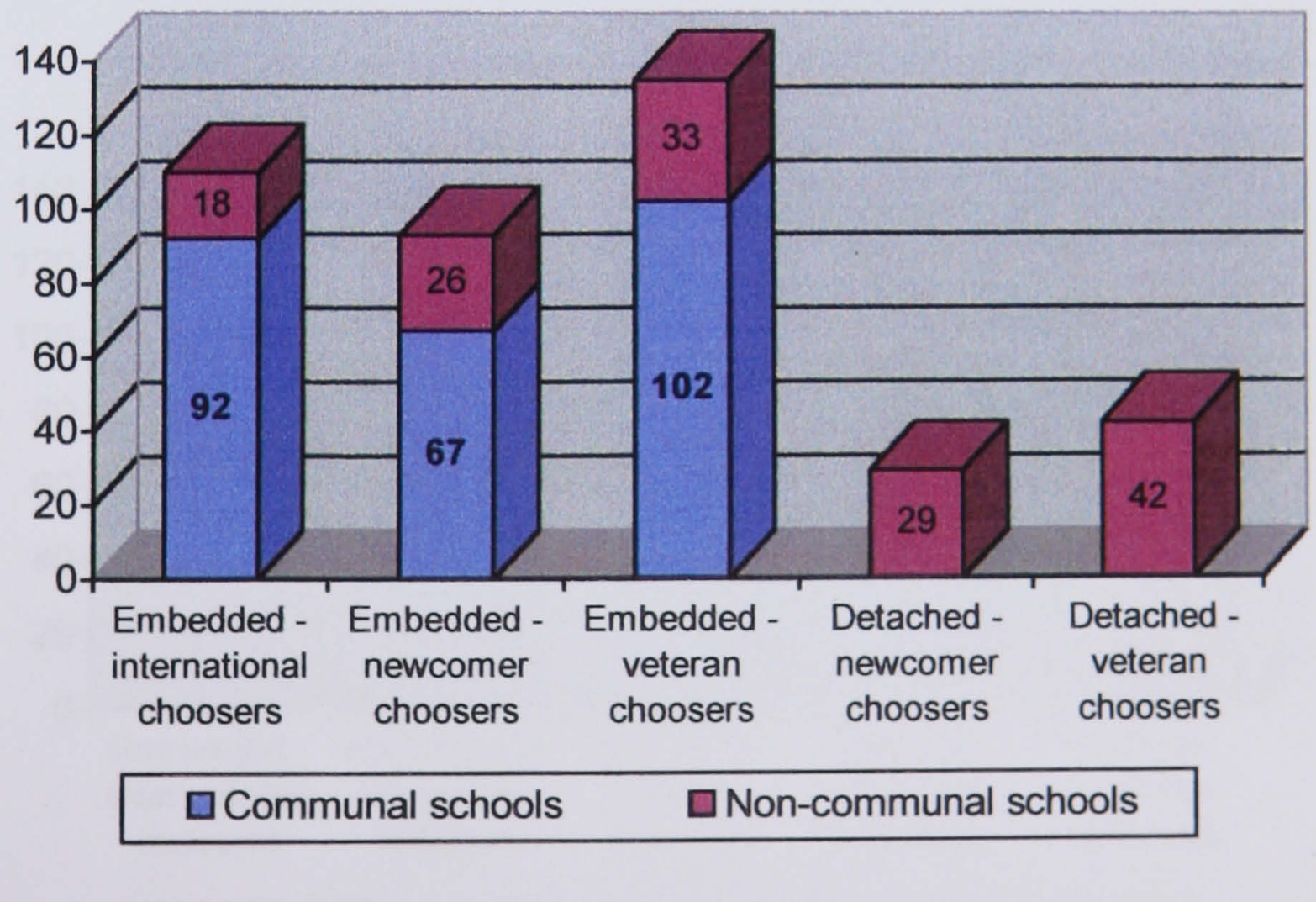
This section describes the general pattern of schooling among the families who took part in this study. To analyse the respondents' schooling patterns, I chose to focus on four dimensions of the chosen schools: 1) 'communal' and 'non-communal' schools, 2) 'Jewish' and 'non-denominational', 3) 'LEA/VA' and 'independent', and at the secondary level: 4) 'selective' and 'comprehensive'. These variables were chosen because they have emerged in the analyses as the most significant factors in the choice process. Charts 5-8 present the number of transfers conducted to each type of schools among embedded families compared to detached choosers, while comparing three group's of choosers: the international choosers, the newcomers and the veteran choosers. The purpose of this comparison is to assess the changes that may have occurred in the participants' schooling patterns, during the time they have lived in London.

The next chart (no. 5) shows the number of children who were enrolled in communal and non-communal schools. The findings demonstrate that overall 78% of the embedded choosers were enrolled in communal schools since their arrival to London. The comparison between the groups suggests that 85% of the children attended communal schools upon arrival to Britain while among veteran choosers 75% of the children were enrolled in community schools. The drop in the percentage of children enrolled in communal schools suggests that there was a movement away from these schools over time, which seems to be in line with the families' level of embeddedness discussed earlier. The data on enrolment in communal schools across the different stages of education, indicates that parents were more likely to enrol their children in communal schools at pre-school and primary school stage rather than at the secondary level. One explanation could be that community schools, especially at the secondary level, were highly oversubscribed and difficult to access. Despite the decrease in enrolment in community schools, more than 75% of the children still

attended communal schools. In contrast to the embedded families, children of detached choosers were not enrolled in communal schools.

An analysis comparing settlers, sojourners, trans-migrants and representative of Israeli companies has demonstrated that those who perceived themselves as temporary residents in London, tended to follow a communal pattern of schooling in higher proportions than those who perceived their stay in London as a permanent one: all sojourners, 68% of the representatives, and 67% of trans-migrants enrolled their children at communal schools, while 54% of settlers' children attended non-communal schools.

Chart no. 5: School enrolement of interviewees' children: communal and non-communal schools by groups of choosers

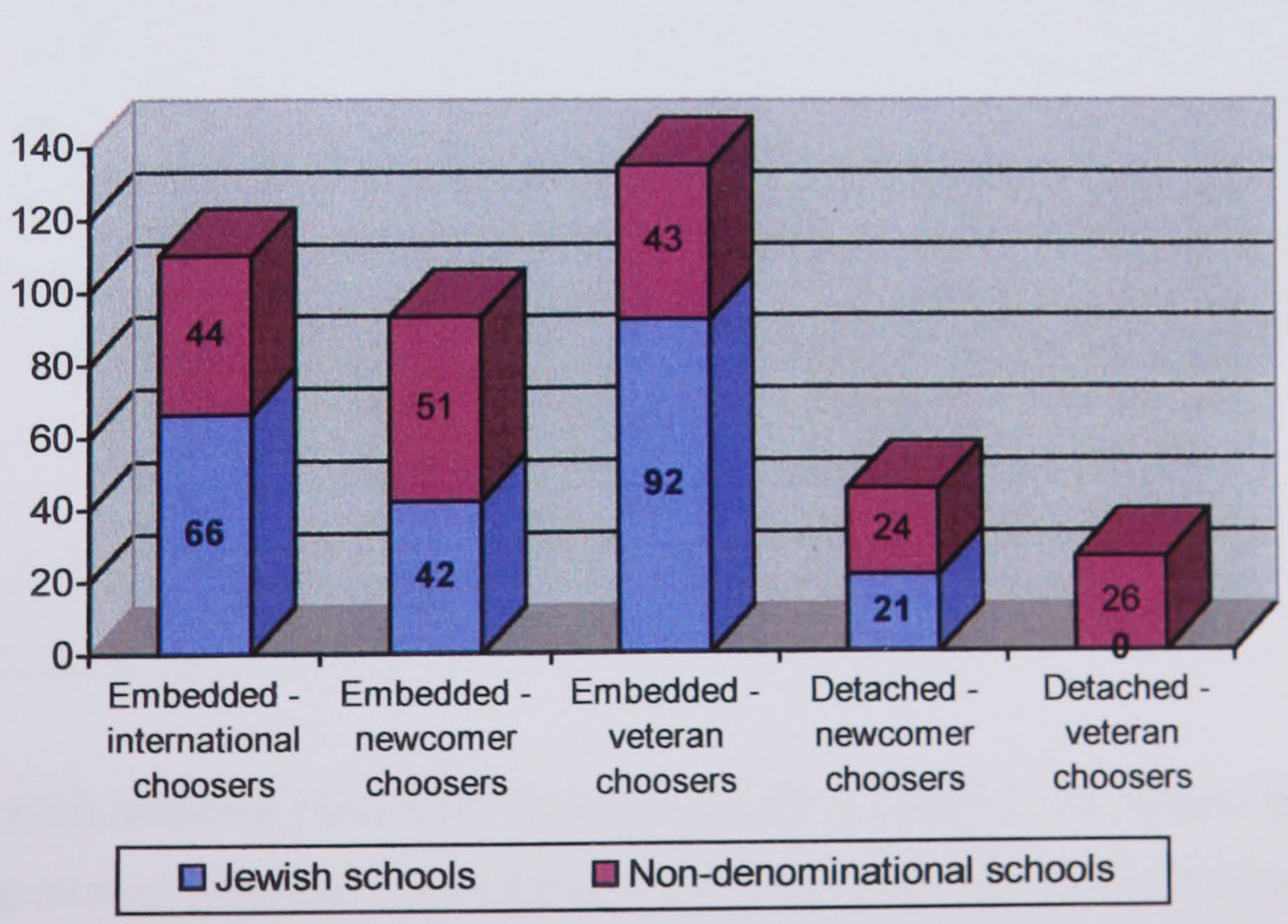


Nevertheless, the overall high proportion of children in embedded families enrolled in communal schools, and the consistent high enrolment across all groups, demonstrates the strength and durability of the congregative and

segregative pattern of schooling that this group of immigrants seems to display.

The next chart (no. 6) presents the children's enrolment over time in Jewish and non-denominational schools. The chart shows that 61% of the embedded children attended Jewish schools. This pattern was inconsistent across the different stages of education: about 80% of the nursery aged children attended Jewish (including Israeli) nurseries, 38% of the primary school aged children attended Jewish primary schools, and the small number of children arriving to London as teenagers were enrolled mainly (72%) in Jewish secondary schools. This may explain the differences found between the groups as most of the newcomer choosers were choosing communal primary schools at the time, most of which were non-Jewish.

Chart no. 6: School enrolement of interviewees' children: Jewish and non-denominational schools by groups of choosers

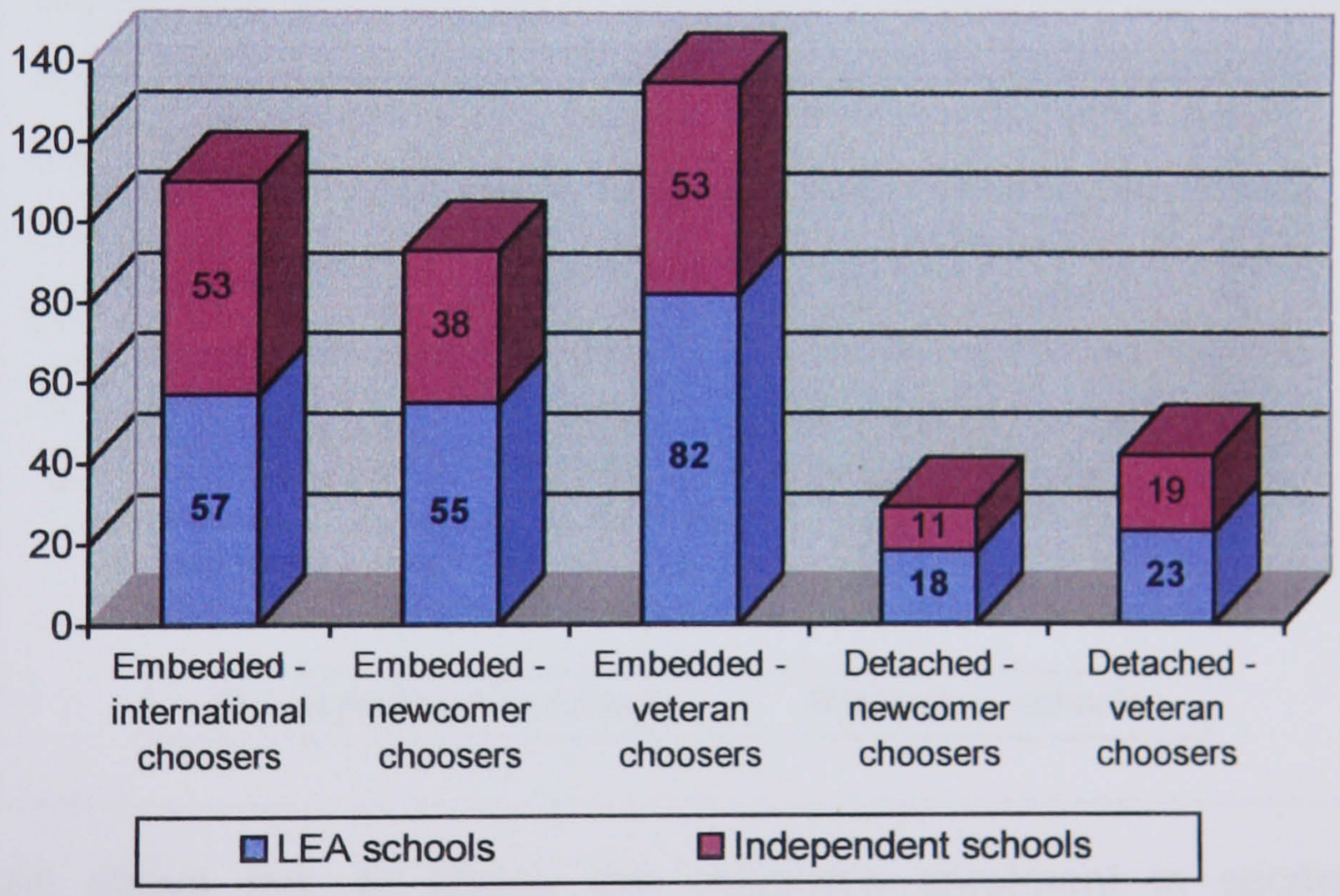


No differences were found between sojourners and settlers, trans-nationals and representatives, in terms of their children's enrolment in Jewish or non-Jewish schools.

A comparison between secular and religious families revealed that 69% of the transfers conducted by moderately religious and religious families were to Jewish schools and nurseries while 56% of the transfers conducted by secular families were to Jewish schools.

The findings suggest that the choice between Jewish or non-denominational environment was secondary to the choice of communal schools, as the tendency of embedded choosers to follow the communal pattern of schooling seems to explain their choice of Jewish or non-Jewish schools.

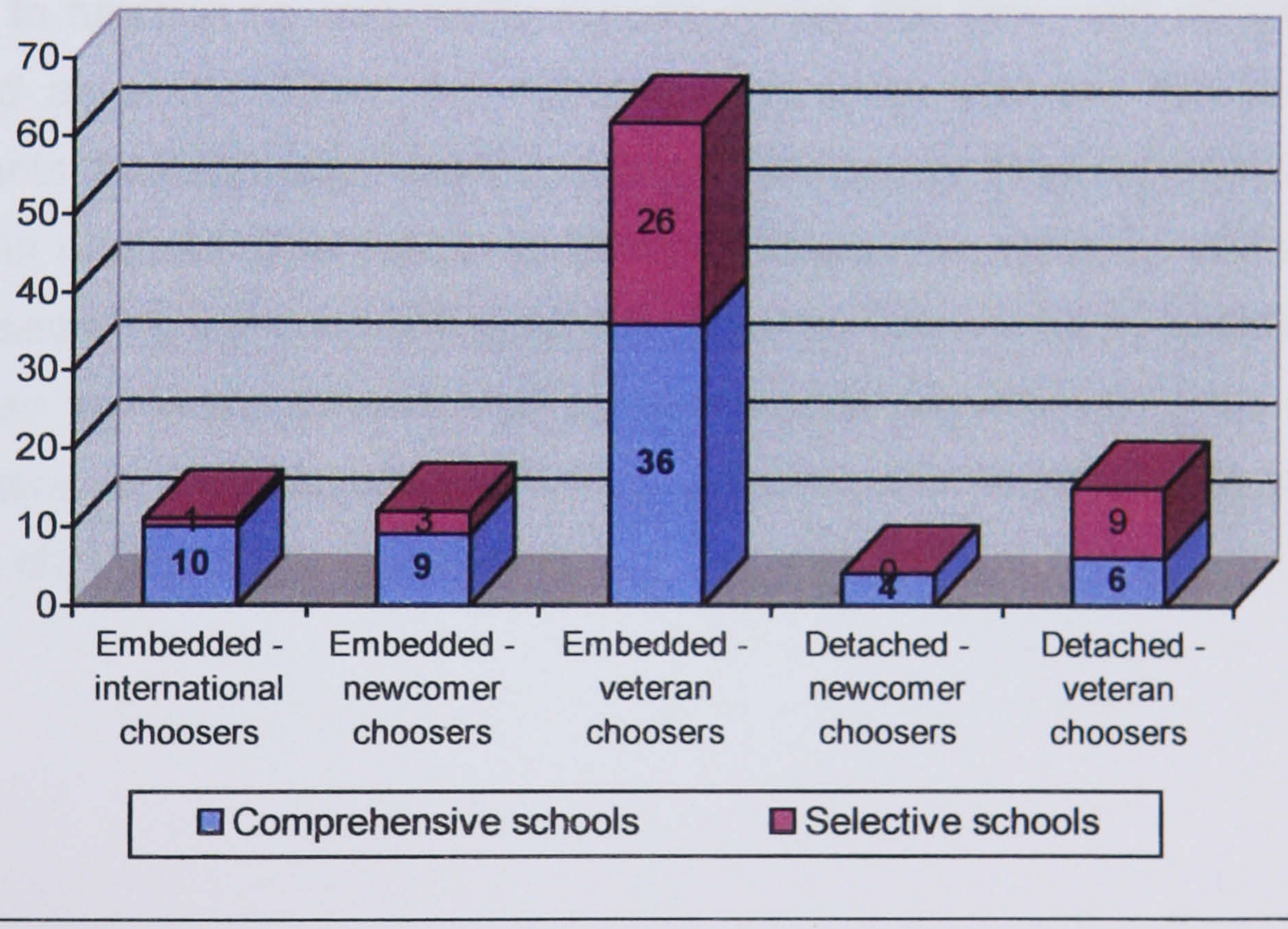
Chart no. 7: School enrolement of interviewees' children: LEA and independent schools by groups of choosers



The following analysis (chart no. 7) presents the children's enrolment in LEA and independent schools. The data demonstrate that 43% of the embedded children's transfers were to fee-paying schools, and that international choosers were more likely to enrol their children in independent schools in comparison to the other groups. However, this may be due to the age differences between the groups as many international choosers had younger children in comparison to the other groups. As noted, most nurseries

available in Hill View Gardens were independent. As for detached choosers the findings suggest that veteran choosers seem to be more likely to enrol their children in independent schools, than newcomer chooses. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that the general tendency to finance private schooling was relatively high among the interviewees and significantly higher than the general population as well as the Jewish population in Britain (Hart, Schmool and Cohen 2000).

Chart no. 8: Secondary school enrolement of interviewees' children: comprehensive and selective schools by groups of choosers



The chart above (no. 8) shows the children's enrolment in secondary schools, comparing selective and comprehensive schools. The data demonstrate that embedded veteran choosers were most likely to transfer their children to selective schools in comparison to the other groups, and indeed 42% of the transfers to secondary schools among this group were to selective schools. Among detached veteran choosers most children were enrolled at the secondary level in independent selective schools.

In conclusion, one of the first research phenomena I had come across and was able to confirm was the tendency of Israeli families, especially the 'embedded' families, to congregate in particular 'community' schools. However, the findings reported here also indicate that the tendency to congregate weakens over time, although not significantly.

The presentation above does not offer any clues as to **why** these families tended to chose these particular schools (9 nurseries, 5 primary schools, 2 secondary schools and 3 colleges) and ignored or rejected other schools in the area (there are nearly 60 primary and 15 secondary schools in Westway). Moreover, as noted earlier, the pattern of enrolment in these schools changed over time, and there were indeed some schools that ceased to function as community schools during this time, and others that emerged as such. Given the occurrence of these changes and that as immigrants the information regarding these schools has to be communicated abroad in order to allow people to find their way to the schools, one of the main research questions relating to these schools was – how do Israelis find their way to these schools, or in sociological terminology: how does segregation in education occur? This question will be addressed in the findings chapters of this dissertation.

7. Setting the Stage, Aligning the Spotlights...

This chapter sets the scene for the forthcoming research findings chapters: the first section briefly presents the main arguments of this study and clarifies the theoretical key points from which the analytical scheme has developed. The following section explains why I chose the school choice process as a key event in this study, and highlights the aspects of the group's culture that may be revealed by analysing this process. The third section introduces the three categories of choosers by which the findings chapters are organised, and the last section describes the ways in which 'the story line' evolves: how data is deployed in the text and findings are presented, and the organisation of the findings chapters.

Opening note: the disadvantage thesis

In the previous parts of this dissertation, I briefly discussed the school choice policies introduced in Britain with the ERA 1988. The research review reveals that with few exceptions (Gorard, Fitz and Taylor 2001) most British researchers are unanimous in their claim that school choice policies serve to empower the powerful and disadvantage the disadvantaged, and consequently emerge as a major factor in maintaining, reinforcing and reproducing social class divisions. British researchers recurrently voice their fears that the way choice among public schools is being implemented in Britain, when combined with the private selective schools tradition, is leading to increasing inequality and social polarisation (Ball and Whitty 1990; Walford 1992; Ball 1993; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1996; Tomlinson 1998).

The existing research also exposes the devices that yield these outcomes: many studies indicate that parents are positioned differently as consumers in the educational market, and that their market position is dependant on their

cultural, social and symbolic capitals as well as financial resources (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Reay and Ball 1997; Wells 1996; Elmore and Fuller 1996). These studies stress the significance of cultural resources in establishing access to the choice process, and demonstrate that some consumers - mainly working class families, members of minority ethnic or racial groups and immigrants - are poorly equipped to deal with this market (Tomlinson 1998; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1994; Macrae, Maguire and Ball 1997; Elmore and Fuller 1996). Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1996) claim that the educational market operates as a class-reproduction system, through mechanisms that work in favour of skilled consumers while hampering the unskilled. These mechanisms are effectively exploited by middle class families in their quest for relative advantage, social mobility and inter-generational reproduction (Ball 2003b).

Much of the research conducted in Britain explores and details the resources and capacities that seem to affect the positioning of families in the educational market. This literature has produced a comprehensive catalogue of 'market-fitness' skills and resources, extending from the most transparent financial resources, residential location, travel means, parents' occupation and education (Ball 1997; Walford 1992; Ball Bowe and Gewirtz 1995; Gorard, Fitz and Taylor 2001; Maddaus 1990), to cultural, social and symbolic resources, such as the families' inclination to engage with the market (Gewirtz Ball and Bowe 1994), their access to information and knowledge (Ball and Vincent 1998), the parents' 'educational inheritance' (Edwards, Fitz and Whitty 1989), their aspirations, educational biographies and horizons (Ball 2003a; Ball, Macrae and Maguire 1998; Ball, Reay and David 2002), their educational and familial values (Ball 2003a; Ball, Davis, Reay and David 2002), parental involvement in schools (Reay 1998), their social ties (Ball and Vincent 1998), emotional factors (Reay 2000), language skills (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1994), racial and ethnic identities (Ball, Reay and David 2002; Ball, Maguire and Macrae 1998) and many others. These studies underscore the vulnerable market position of those who lack in market- fitness, suggesting that recent immigrants, such as the families studied here, are most likely to be negatively effected by market forces (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1995; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Reay and Ball

1997; Walford 1992; Tomlinson 1998). As noted, few studies examine the ways in which immigrant parents engage with the education market, however, the small number of studies that include immigrant respondents in their samples (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1994; Ball, Reay and David 2002; Noden, West, David and Edge 1998) suggest that these families lack the most basic resources that will enable them to survive in a market system: they are unacquainted with policies, regulations and procedures, they do not possess the fundamental knowledge nor the social contacts to support them in gathering information, and their language skills hinders their capacity to negotiate with the system. Their cultural capital is in the wrong currency, their social capital is limited and their symbolic capital is often inadequate.

The existing research goes further to suggest that immigrant families may be disadvantaged not only by their inadequate capacities to engage with the market, but also by the cultural properties and identities which inform their educational conceptions and choice making practices (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1994; Wells 1996; Ball, Maguire and Macrae 1998; Ball, Reay and David 2002). The literature on international migration indicates (Carmon 1996; Waldinger 1996b; Portes and Bach 1985; Gans 1999; Gold 2002; Borjas 1999), that first generation immigrants tend to maintain their own cultural heritage and national identities many years after their migration, and some are not willing to be re-socialised into the host culture. The mismatch between their cultural capital and that of the education system, may position them as 'outsiders', and may further weaken their standing and impede their engagement with the education market.

Following this line of argumentation beyond the 'disadvantage thesis' highlighted above, I propose that because school is often the main re-socialisation agent for immigrant families, it can become one of the primary channels for integration. However, depending on the school's intake, it can also become the principal channel for segregation, ethnic ghettoisation or segmented assimilation (Portes and Bach 1985; Zhou 1997a). Thus, the choice of school among immigrant families may reflect not only their ability to master the choice process, but also, their inclination towards integration in the

host society, that is, their tendency to adapt to the host society on one hand, and the degree to which they maintain their original cultural features and identities on the other.

The research on Israeli emigrants (Shokeid 1988; Sabar 2000; Gold 2002; Cohen 1999), displays some findings that may support this premise. These studies demonstrate that Israelis who live abroad tend to segregate from both host society members and local Jews, seem to associate mainly with their compatriots, and have a strong nationalistic cultural identity. Their findings also illustrate that Israeli parents view the schooling of their children as a problematic issue, since no school presents a good-fit in terms of culture, and thus the schooling process bears the seeds of a potential conflict between home and school, and consequently, between parents and children (Gold 1994; Sabar 2000). Furthermore, these studies suggest that Israelis perceive their immigrant community as a central factor in the socialisation process of their children, as they attempt 'to raise Israeli children abroad'.

This is the key point and the starting point for the forthcoming presentation of the research findings. This research focuses on the school choice process among people who are marginal in terms of their positioning in the education marketplace, both due to their lack of market skills and resources, and the way they position themselves towards their new homeland and its culture. To complicate this line of argumentation further, most of the participants who took part in this study are middle-class, and have at their disposal some resources that may potentially compensate for both types of marginality. The 'disadvantage' thesis outlined here together with the 'integration' question are the background to, as well as the focus of the forthcoming research findings chapters.

In the findings chapters that follow I shall attempt to explore the ways in which these families engage with the education markets in their localities, aiming to highlight the intricate effects of their double-edged positioning - their class and ethnic resources - on their decision making process and educational patterns.

Through the keyhole: school choice as a key event

School choice is a unique process, where parents choose the principal socialisation agent for their children. While the choice of school is a significant pre-transitional moment for any family, it is a momentous key-event in the lives of international immigrants, for whom the school becomes a re-socialisation agent, and as such, it is both a challenging arena, and a site of potential cultural conflict between home and school.

There are four elements that make the school choice process a particularly suitable key event for research purposes:

1. **Displaying the familial resources:** school choice is principally an exercise in market-fitness, where each family draws on a myriad of class and cultural resources available to it (financial, cultural, symbolic, informational, emotional and others), in order to secure their children's place in the school of their choice. Studying the ways in which parents engage with the educational market, thus places under the spotlight these resources, or the lack of them, enabling an analysis of the type, the combination and the quantity of these familial resources.

2. **Identifying group resources:** in addition to individual resources, families draw on group resources (social, ethnic and human capitals) as they negotiate with the education market. Their actions take place within a particular network of associations, involving familial, social and professional ties, often encompassing local, national and international locations. Exploring the families' encounters with the educational market, displays the availability or scarcity of social capital, and provides the means to analyse the amount, the strength and reliability of these associations as well as their impact on the choice process.

3. **Displaying the family's constitution through the search for a 'matching' school:** school choice is, for many families, and especially for middle class parents (Ball 2003a) an exercise in 'matching' their children to what they perceive as 'the appropriate' school for them. The effort to match the child to a school often provokes self-reflection into a multitude of issues (such as: child rearing philosophy, school/family role in socialising youngsters, home culture versus school's culture, expectations from school, aspirations from children, and many other topics), as well as relays into awareness self-perceptions and definitions of the families' social standing, group affiliation, cultural identity and class association. This is often accompanied by an examination of the child's strengths and weaknesses (Ball 1997). Researching the choice process, and particularly the families' considerations for choice, mirrors these familial perceptions and characteristics as parents attempt to define the characteristics of the 'right school'.

4. **The education market as a cross-cultural arena:** the school choice process in this study occurs in a particularly intriguing cultural arena: it is where the two cultures, the Israeli culture - carried by the respondents, and the British culture – signified by the schools, converge; where cultural scripts - habituses and identities – are exposed, and families negotiate their re-socialisation process and reposition themselves in relation to both cultures. In studying the choice process, this double-facetted cultural setting comes to life most vividly, placing each culture against the other, thus emphasising the differences between them.

The elements cited above – the families' resources, the exposure of the families' characteristics and perceptions, and the educational market as a cross cultural arena, feature the school choice process as a particularly apt key-event for studying the cultural setting within which this group of immigrants live and function.

The story line

The following findings chapters (8-10) examine the school choice process and its outcomes, as these were perceived by the respondents focusing on the process: the choosers' information gathering strategies, their decision making process, and their experiences between school registration and acceptance.

The concluding chapter (11), presents an analysis of the choosers' skills and resources these families drew on as they engaged with the education market, and develops the main argument of this study, thus bringing this dissertation to a close.

Like many other qualitative papers, the presentation and analysis of research findings in this dissertation, requires many movements between the academic text, with its citations, theoretical ambience and academic literacy (Lea and Street 1998), and the respondents' narratives with their esoteric cultural rhythm, language and contents. As is often the case, while the academic script maintains its theme, its logic and consistency, the participants' narrative are deployed as research data: they are purposefully fragmented into topic-centred collages of quotations and episodes, and utilised to support, verify, advocate, illustrate, speculate, emphasise, advance, epitomise or garnish the research arguments. Through these fragmented narratives, a window opens, by which the story of the Israeli immigrant community in London unfolds, and its culture unveiled. The fragmentation of the interviewees' voices, the constant movement between the academic text and the pulse and buzz of their voices, constitutes the drama of international migration: it symbolises the disjointed, broken and transitory worlds in which these families live, their transition, their adaptation and their identities.

Throughout the findings chapters, my main role would be to erect 'transit platforms' between the two texts: the academic text, the 'data', and 'findings' where my voice as a researcher and a sociologist will dominate the scene, and the interviewees' narratives where they articulate pieces of their lives, concerns

and thoughts. Between the two texts I will often assume the role of a story-teller, interpreter, translator - indeed, a middleman between the two cultures.

Lastly, the division of the text into the chapters described above does not indicate clean separations into topics or themes, nor sequential order. The issues presented here intermix, and are dependent on one another.

Clients with attitudes

The next finding chapters centre on the process of choice, from the information gathering, through to the decision making, followed by registration and acceptance. Following the introductory notes made earlier, the focus of these chapters is on the families' resources and capacities – those that were found relevant and significant to the choice of school. The analysis of the school choice process is presented in the forthcoming chapters from a comparative perspective, and therefore it is structured by the presentation of three groups of choosers: the **unsuspecting international choosers**, the **quasi- practiced newcomers** and the **competent -veterans.**

In analysing the transcripts it became apparent that there were three groups among interviewees, which seem to experience the choice process differently. These groups were given titles which indicate their positioning in the educational marketplace and their relative capacities as choosers, as well as signify their standing in terms of their migration and adaptation process:

1. **The unsuspecting international choosers**: this group includes 36 families who emigrated to London with school-aged children. These families engaged with the British educational market and experienced the school choice process for the first time in their lives, and most began the process prior to their arrival and while abroad. This category includes narratives voiced by newcomers as well as veterans as they recounted their first encounters with schools in London.

2. **The quasi practiced newcomers**: these were newcomers (n=12) who have lived in London less than 3 years and described their most recent choice of school (which was not their 'international choice'). In addition, this group includes reports made by veteran families reporting on earlier choice experiences.

3. **The competent veterans**: this category includes veteran families (n=34) who have lived in London longer than 3 years and described their most recent choice of school. All families have had previous school choice experiences since they immigrated to Britain. This group includes most of the intermarried families.

I would like to emphasise here that these categories do not depict different groups of people. What these files delineate are snapshots of the respondents at different points of their immigration journey and adaptation curve. Together, the narratives of these groups present a developmental picture, demonstrating the ways in which choosers' skills accumulate and develop over time and market positioning change. As noted, this evolutional representation is uncommon in school choice research.

It is also important to state here is that these categories characterise distinct directions, relationships and perspectives that were found in the data, and that most of the interviewees, at different points of their immigration journey, fit well with the principal features of the groups highlighted here. However, not all accounts relate straightforwardly into these types: detached families, expatriates and trans-nationals occasionally deviate from these patterns and some of them seem to be in a different market position than the rest. I will endeavour to highlight these exceptions where they appear.

The track ahead

The next 50,000 words or so, will tell the stories of Israeli immigrant families residing in London, as they play the 'education market game' and as they

develop their 'market fitness skills'. The story begins with the novice players and ends with the accomplished choosers; it explores what it is like to be able, yet unsuited, and the amount of skill and resources that are needed in order to take part in what is probably one of the most complex education markets available world-wide.

The people you are about to meet, do the best within their circumstances to face the challenges that their immigration process brings about; educating and socialising their children being two of these challenges. The fragments of their voices below capture them at specific moments in their biographies where they face up to the burdens and responsibilities of parenting the second generation of British – Israeli immigrants.

8. Brave New Immigrants: The Unsuspecting International Choosers

This chapter delineates the experiences of the **unsuspecting international choosers** as they engage with the choice process in London. This group includes 36 families who immigrated to London with school-aged children. These families were engaging with the British educational market and experiencing the school choice process for the first time in their lives, and most have began the process prior to their relocation and while abroad. Most of their accounts related to primary school transfers and nurseries. This category includes narratives voiced by newcomers as well as veterans as they recounted their first encounters with schools in London.

This type of choosers compares to those parents described by Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1996) as 'the disconnected'. They are 'working on the surface structure of choice' (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1996: 106), compelled by schemes of expectations and considerations which rest on fundamental ignorance as to schools and schooling in Britain, and constrained by the processes involved in international relocation.

There were four key qualities to the unsuspecting group of international choosers: firstly, the school choice process was '**absorbed**' within a bigger event in their lives - their immigration to London, and was directly affected by this process. Secondly, the families' **positioning** in relation to the education market was particularly vulnerable - they were outsiders: they engaged with schools, initially from abroad, at a time when they had no legal standing in Britain, and they lacked the most basic knowledge about London, its schools and registration procedures. Furthermore, they were 'unsuspecting' choosers, because they were not aware of their responsibilities, and although some may have been aware of their market position, they were not alert to the risks it

entailed. Thirdly, their decision making process was both **culturally informed and circumstantial**, that is, decisions were driven by the circumstances surrounding their migration, and therefore they often displayed a short-term vision. And lastly, their choice process was heavily dependent on their **social ties** both in Israel and in London, often leading these newcomers to follow a communal pattern of schooling.

At the gateway

In analysing the narratives in which they described their initial encounters with British schools, mainly those conducted from abroad, what was most apparent was their sense of urgency, impatience, almost intolerance towards the entire process. These parents seem to be 'tackling' the process in an attempt to minimise the hassle involved, and with one goal in mind: to get it over and done with; to secure their children's place in a school, and as soon as possible:

> *Orit: Liran was only 4 years old when we came, and I had a good friend who lived here and she has a daughter, same age as Liran, so she's the one who did the registration for us, and honestly, I just, I decided that whatever she chose for herself is good enough for us. I didn't put that much thought into it (Interview no. 39).*
>
> *Bracha: Noah came here about 3 months before Shirley and I did, and he asked at the company and they told him that all expatriate children go to Broadwalk – so he went there and filled the forms. And that was it.*
> *Rona: Did you consider any other school?*
> *Bracha: No (Interview no. 40).*

This impatient attitude may be explained by the circumstances under which the choice of school occurred for these parents: they were at the peak of their immigration journey and probably at the most stressful time (Grinberg and Grinberg 1989): they were slowly disengaging from their everyday life in Israel, and have yet to engage with life in Britain. Moreover, nearing their relocation date, they were burdened with a tremendous number of unfinished issues that still needed to be worked out, some of which may be more pressing than the children's schooling, such as work, finance and housing. As a result, the schooling issue and having to choose a school, was perceived as a burden, or

as one of the interviewees articulated it: 'just another item on the endless list of things to do' before and after their transition London:

> *Margalit: I had this list put together about 6 months before we came here, here it is - 26 pages! And these were the things we had to complete in Israel before we came – such as, leaving our jobs and training successors, clearing our offices, letting the flat, selling the cars, issuing visas, buying flight tickets, making final payments on the house, having farewell parties at schools, at work and with the families, renewing credit cards, issuing international driving licenses, getting health documents from doctors, choosing a cargo company, sorting and packing; the list is endless! And this is just one half of it – then there are all the things that needed to be done here in London - like finalising my registration to the MBA, applying for a grant, sorting out Hagay's job arrangements, finding temporary accommodation and then renting a house, buying a car, opening a bank account, and then your cargo arrives and you unpack, Urr, I get exhausted just by reading this list. Oh and those forms to fill – so many forms; four for the embassy, another one for the cargo company, another for the insurance company, then two different forms for each school, four forms for the uni, why do they have to make them so complicated? So you see, with so much to do and so little time to do it, I was relieved that they had places for my kids at Parkland, and that I was able to complete the registration prior to arrival. I didn't look at Alton at the end (Interview no. 23).*

While the other groups of choosers, may have had the emotional space that would enable them to disengage from everyday life, to prioritise the choice of school, devote the time, focus their attention, and allocate familial resources in order to engage with the educational market - these international choosers were unable to do that. With the flight date close by, they were in a state of physical and emotional overload, often nearing exhaustion. Their familial routines have been broken, their homes were in a state of chaos, and the list of things to do and forms to fill was ever growing. For many, the combination of stress and physical demands of this stage were difficult, and they experienced sleepless nights. Fears and concerns about the future, the sense of uncertainly and risk were very present at that point (Grinberg and Grinberg 1989).

In addition, these families were going through 'a farewell stage' where they were parting from people who will no longer be part of their everyday lives – work colleagues, customers, friends, acquaintances, and their closest family circle, as well as withdrawing from their familiar surroundings - their home,

neighbourhood, the school, the car; the details that make ones' 'landscapes of life' which will no longer be theirs. Indeed, their emotional capital (Reay 2000) was strained and depleted by the tremendous burdens and anxieties presented by their relocation phase and the changes they were about to inflict on their lives, and they were unable to fully engage with the choice process: they did not have the time, the energy and nerve, the patience or resilience that would have enabled them to prioritise schooling issues, and therefore displayed little inclination to engage with the choice process beyond the minimum action required 'to get it done'.

Looking retrospectively at their initial choice process, some parents acknowledged their carelessness, which for many of them meant that they had to rely on information received from distant acquaintances, whose knowledge and information regarding schools could not be assessed, and had to be taken at face value. As one parent explained:

> *Oren: When you come here you have no idea how the schools work here – but you do know about education as it is in Israel. So I was looking for a certain type of school, an open school, like the one he went to in Israel, and I searched for one, and just couldn't get the information, so I was told Alton was, well, not really 'open', but more 'open' than the rest, so that's what we went for (Casual conversation no. 20).*

For some children this haphazard process resulted in yet another school transfer immediately after their arrival:

> *Orit: We were there exactly 10 days, and it was a catastrophe! Liran was miserable, he was crying all day, although I was with him most of the time. It was simply horrible! The school was very disappointing! And so we came, three families, and a week later all of us left, each in a different direction (Interview no. 39).*

The laxity they displayed may be explained by five factors:

1. **Trust in the system:** there was an assumption among interviewees that education in Britain was generally of good standard and thus not an issue of immediate concern: whichever school their children will attend – it would not fail them. As one father noted: 'we are in Britain you know, we are not talking about a third world country here!'

2. **Self-confidence**: the general trust in the British system was also intertwined with their (typically middle-class) self-confidence (Ball 2003a): their fundamental belief that things, even if they do go wrong, could be fixed by re-allocating resources:

> *Anat: At the end of the day you can sort everything with money. If nothing else works – you can always take him to an independent non-selective school like Holliwell-Bay, and he can stay there until a place becomes available in the school that you want (Casual conversation no. 357).*

3. **Ignorance of risks**: another factor affecting their attitude was their unawareness of the risks: these parents came from an education system where the responsibility for finding a school for a child lies with the local authority, not with the parents. Thus, the parents were ignorant both of their responsibilities and of the possibility of the child becoming schoolless:

> *Renni: At the end we registered only in July when we arrived, and I must say I panicked, because they told us they might not have a place for both of them. That did not even occur to me as a possibility, and Danit was practically schoolless until the school year began (Interview no. 7).*

4. **Modeling effect**: most of these parents engaged with the unfamiliar system through a medium – a veteran Israeli: a friend, an acquaintance, someone who 'has been there and done that'. Engaging with the system through these veterans and with their help seemed to have a 'modeling effect' which helped in restoring the newcomers' confidence and laxity, as they saw others who have gone through the same processes, prevail and prosper.

5. **Considerations for choice**: some of the reluctance that these parents displayed in engaging with the choice process occurred as a result of the parents' perceptions and expectations regarding their children's first year in London:

> *Renni: I thought of it as a wasted year, after all, they came with very*

little English – so I just wanted them to learn English and feel comfortable at the school (Interview no. 7).

Many parents felt that the year of transition was a unique year, because of the language learning and adaptation process the children would experience, and thus noted that educational considerations that would normally apply – would be irrelevant for that year. On the other hand, being inexperienced immigrants, they did not know which considerations do apply. Consequently, they focused their attention on comfort in terms of travel distance and household arrangements, social considerations and the child's happiness rather than academic progress.

Although it may seem that these families survived their initial choice process relatively unharmed – this was not always the case. Details next...

'The London's famous Catch 22 situation'

The 'Catch 22' situation was one of the most baffling situations that these immigrant families have faced, and over the years that I have spent in the field I have heard several versions of it. Lately this story has become a communal tale, often told as a funny anecdote at dinner parties:

Dora: So we came here on a pre-arrival visit and went to the school and they said: 'we cannot register your children until you have a local address'. Fine. We got it. So we went to the estate agent, I think that was 4 months prior to our relocation date, and we said we wanted to rent a house 4 months ahead (properties in Israel are normally offered 3-6 months ahead RH) so that we could have an address. And here comes the catch: he says, well, you cannot rent now for 4 months ahead unless you want to pay the rent for the next 3-4 months. All the houses I have, he says, are vacant, so you can rent them now, and get the key in a week, or come back in 3 months and then rent a house! OK, we go back to the school and say well, that's the situation. They say: sorry, we cannot accept your form without a local address. Come back in July when you arrive and hopefully we'll still have a place for your kids. So what are our options? either throw away thousands of pounds and rent a house for months in advance, or, lie about our address, that is, give someone else's address, or, take the risk that we would come in July and the school would be full!

Dora: We decided to do a combination of those but then came the second, much bigger Catch 22 situation!
Hanan: Well, I came on my own in June, and Dora and the kids joined in July. I went to the estate agent and he drove me around and after seeing a few houses I decided on one of them. Now, when I wanted to make the down payment with my international Visa card, he says, I cannot accept that, do you have a local credit card or cheque? I say no, not yet, I haven't opened a bank account. He says, well, then, open a bank account and come back to me to finalise the contract. So, now I go to the bank, I stand in queue patiently, and when I finally get to the desk she smiles, gets the forms for me and explains how to fill them. 'We will also need a proof of your address', she says, 'an electricity bill would be fine', BUT, I say we do not have an address YET, we just arrived, and although I found a house I have not yet finalised the contract and I do not have a bill for you. 'Oh, no problem, the rental contract will be fine as a proof of your address', she smiles politely, but I get a little angry now. so I say slowly and loudly: I do not have an address here because the estate agent wants me to have a local bank account FIRST! Can't I give you my address in Israel? No sir, she smiles again. Sorry sir, we cannot open a bank account without a local, permanent address, sir!
Gila: A real deadlock! What did you do?
Hannan: I really didn't know what to do! I had such a bad headache I decided to go my Bed and Breakfast and have a rest and think it through. Luckily, the owner was there – an Israeli who has been living here 30 years. I told her what happened, and she laughed and said – that's the famous London catch 22 situation you got locked into! Lets see how we get you out of this. She called 'Castle' (an Israeli owned estate agency RH), and then went there with me and introduced me to Yossi, the owner. He said: don't worry, here you can pay with your Israeli credit card. But first let's find a house for you. Again, I went and saw a few properties, chose one, paid the down payment, and Yossi gave me a letter for the bank. The next day I ran back to the school early in the morning – only to find that it was closed because of the half term. It took another week to sort the schooling issue – and the cost - are all these white hair that you see here! I was so frustrated and angry over this – I simply could not believe that this ... could happen in London! (Casual conversation no. 172).

Albeit the comical undertone of the story, and the happy ending in this case, this situation has become a stressful event for many families, often resulting in delayed registration to schools and uncertainty that extended for months not only over the children's schooling, but also over housing and finance. Significantly, perhaps more than any other anecdote, this tale exhibits the

families' positioning as outsiders: the statutory prerequisite they need in order to become 'insiders', is an address, which is practically and symbolically, a proof of their existence, their presence and their entitlements, and only then, they 'come into being' from the schools' perspective.

Furthermore, this episode demonstrates their inability to 'work' the market because of their awkward statutory positioning: they cannot register before their transition because they do not have an address, and therefore have to take the risk that the available school places would be taken by the time they arrive. The quoted family responded to that risk by changing their immigration plans, but most other families did not, and in some cases this situation resulted in the children being schoolless or in the child being transferred to a second school after a short period:

> *Miri: It was really bad. at Broadwalk, they had a place for Liora (year 8) but not for Sean (year 10). They said we have to wait for a month to see if a vacancy comes up, because some people leave and do not write to the school so they have to wait a month before they take the child out of the register. I personally thought they were trying to put us off because they did not believe that he would be able to do his GCSEs, so they actually didn't want him, but their official letter said we had to wait and see. So he stayed alone at home while the other three each went to their new schools – and he was so miserable. After 2 weeks at home he decided to travel with Liora and he just stood there near the school gate, for hours. He became friendly with the security people. After a few days the teachers and the head noticed him and a week later they called him and said – bring your parents. I think that if it wasn't for his pertinacity – he would not have gotten in (Interview no. 8).*

> *Alice: Riva sent her son to this school, what was the name? I can't recall, but anyway it was in Elm Gardens area, and he was the only Israeli there. He had terrible time there, he was bullied almost on a daily basis. Finally, she decided to keep him at home until they had a vacancy at Broadwalk; he stayed home almost two months (Casual conversation no. 114).*

What is perhaps most apparent in these episodes is their disadvantaged - disconnected positioning (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1994): both their lack of knowledge regarding procedures, and their sense of helplessness demonstrate their inability to negotiate with the system, that is, with any market system. As

the 'Catch 22' tale demonstrates, it was often their veteran, more-experienced and highly networked compatriot that came to the rescue, with pragmatic solutions and sometimes a willingness to 'bend the standard regulations' in order to address their particular needs and circumstances.

Liquid assets

Material resources can provide families with a number of obvious benefits in the educational marketplace, such as: access to fee-paying schools, ability to rent or buy housing in close proximity to a desired school, affording transportation, hiring child care, recruiting tutors, etc. More than anything else, material resources can expand the choosers' landscapes of choice, placing more options within the families' reach (Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball 1994). However, among this group of immigrant families this possibility did not materialise. Two themes emerged from the data that may explain this: **priorities reshuffling upon relocation**, and the **weak correlation between transferability of material assets and life styles**.

Although most families were middle-class in terms of their skills and means, some found that their immigration had strained their financial resources significantly, leaving them with very few options in the educational marketplace:

> *Renni: I nearly fainted when I realised how much the house rent would cost us! It meant that my grant – which we hoped to live on – would barely cover our rent, and we had to live on what we could get for our flat in Israel, which was not much. So there was just no way that we could afford a private school. So we rejected Parkway because it was religious and expensive, and chose Alton, because it was free and close by (Interview no. 7).*

> *Gila: Our main consideration was financial – we didn't send him to Parkway because we couldn't afford it: with the kindergarten costing as much as it did, we didn't have much of a choice. The kindergarten was extremely expensive, and, there are no state kindergartens here like the ones we have in Israel, so that was our only option. We had to choose a state school, we just couldn't afford to pay for both (Interview no. 3).*

As these parents discovered how expensive life in London could be (in comparison to Israel), most aimed to minimise their expenses by searching for

state schools, fearing that their financial reserves might shrink if they do not calculate their steps carefully. With most families facing financial instability, potential setbacks in terms of work, and risk their existing resources to fund their transition to London, even those who could afford fee-paying schools were reconsidering in view of the costs versus the benefits:

> *Dini: I didn't see the point in sending then to a private school – their English wasn't good enough anyway, so they wouldn't really benefit from what these schools can offer (Interview no. 26).*

> *Gila: We didn't make much of it – we haven't really thought about our considerations and all that – after all it was just year 1 he was going to so if it doesn't work – we could always change next year (Casual conversation no. 161).*

> *Adina: You know how it is at the beginning – you don't know where the good schools are and how to find them – so when you are spending all that money you want to know your are getting what you want – and I didn't have a clue as to what I want and what he needed (Casual conversation no. 165).*

> *Sharona: There are some excellent state schools around – for example, Meadway and Headland – so why pay? (Interview no. 32).*

The parents had a variety of reasons for rejecting fee-paying schools generally, some of these considerations were short term and time specific – such as the common view that the children's first year in London was a 'void time', as one parent put it, or the child's age which makes his educational experiences less significant in the long run, or the parents' inability to identify 'good' schools and define the child's needs at the point of transition. Some arguments reflected a more general understanding of the workings of this market, for example, their awareness that 'good education' can be acquired elsewhere at little cost, or that children could be moved around if they are dissatisfied with the school.

The theme that emerged here could be described as 'priorities reshuffling': as the accounts illustrate, having financial resources did not automatically imply that these would be invested in the children's education. Indeed, immigration can cause a major reshuffling in familial priorities (Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998). Additionally, the parents displayed their middle-class thinking

(Ball 2003a; Bourdieu 1986a) as they calculated the short and long term gains made on their educational investments. The parents quoted above felt that the returns from independent schooling under these particular relocation circumstances were uncertain, and thus such an investment was not prioritised.

Another theme that loomed here was the issue of transferability of financial resources and life styles across national borders; while it may seem fairly easy to transfer economic assets from one country to another, the quotes above demonstrate that this did not necessarily mean that the same life style could be maintained. As one respondent noted: 'with what I earn here – I can live like a king in Israel, and like a beggar in London'.

In contrast to the parents quoted above there were nearly half of the families whose children attended independent schools upon arrival and a few more in this category who seriously considered fee-paying schools. Most of these families were expatriates or company representatives whose companies were paying the schools' tuition. Nevertheless, as the following quotes demonstrate, having the financial freedom did not expand the parents' landscapes of choice significantly:

> *Talma: We have been told that there is one school that all expats' kids go to – so this is where we applied. We knew nothing. I wasn't aware there were other Jewish schools here (Casual conversation no. 104).*
>
> *Orit: I went to see the school, I really preferred a private Jewish school, although we're secular, just to ease the adjustment period, and the company was willing to pay for that, but I went to visit it and I felt it was much too disciplined for Eyal – who you know, came from a very open and liberal environment. It was like an army camp there and he just wouldn't have fitted there. So we went to Alton for a visit and registered him on the spot (Casual conversation no. 58).*

Whether they were financially constrained or financially able, the options that they considered were few, and mainly the ones most popular among other Israeli parents ('communal schools').

The transcripts provide some indications, however, that the choice process undertaken by families who were financially able (and willing) was slightly less

stressful mainly since some independent schools were ready to accept registration forms from abroad thus enabling the parents to finalise the registration process prior to their arrival. Also, these families were able to conduct pre-immigration visits, rent or even buy a house months prior to their arrival and delegate some time-consuming tasks to others. It appears that more than having financial resources, the willingness to buy into the private market meant that these families were in a less vulnerable position than others, in that they were able to execute both their migration plans and choice of school in a more relaxed manner knowing that, as one parent put it: 'you can't go wrong with a private school'. However, the level of sophistication, the number of options and the types of schools considered did not vary significantly between the financially able and others, as most newcomers enrolled upon arrival in communal schools. This may indicate that access to information may be vital in determining their educational horizons.

Musical chairs

In analysing the information gathering practices among this group, four inter-related topics emerged from the data. The first, suggests that the **information** available to this group of choosers was limited in volume and less complex in terms of its contents, in comparison to that which was available to the other groups, and mainly contained the trivial details of the schools and registration procedures. The second theme unpacks the **correlation between knowledge and information**; it depicts the group's foreign 'educational inheritance' and explains the ways in which it has hindered the parents' capacity to search for new information and assimilate it. The third topic offers a **linguistic perspective** on the information gathering practices among these choosers by illustrating the effects of mother tongue usage on their information gathering strategies. The last theme focuses on the **sources of the information** available to this group; it mainly portrays the parents' immigration networks and exposes the impact of the parents' networking practices on their choice process.

Most of the interviewees arriving to London with school-aged children had

begun their school search while in Israel, approximately 1-6 months prior to their emigration. The first phase in the process, for most of them, was the search for information about schools and registration procedures. With a few exceptions, they were able to collect some information about 1-3 schools, and 2-3 kindergartens and about registration procedures. The information was often very basic – including the school's details (telephone number and address), its location and travel arrangements, whether it was Jewish or non-Jewish and its degree of religiosity, whether it was independent, LEA or VA, the costs involved, and how many Israeli children were enrolled in the school or in the relevant year groups. Two additional pieces of information some parents sought were the schools' academic performance and disciplinary policies. The main sources of information were informal: their immigration network (Massey 1988) that is, their international network of friends and acquaintances, and mainly the ethnic community in London.

In comparing the three groups of choosers it became evident that international choosers had little access to formal types of information, such as: list of schools, LEA handbook, league tables or school brochures. While some (8 families, mainly representatives and expatriates) had a list of favoured Jewish schools at their disposal, sent to them by the embassy in London, very few (n=7) had managed to obtain school brochures and registration forms prior to their arrival. Concomitantly, only few (5 families) were able to complete the registration before their relocation to London.

As might be expected, none of the families making inquiries from abroad were able to attend open evenings, however, following the initial information gathering exercise a few parents flew to Britain to see the schools (n=8). Most other families had visited the schools for the first time upon their relocation, and the majority had obtained the school prospectus and registration forms (n=26) at that point. These visits were often conducted for the purpose of looking at the school already selected and contacted rather than part of the process of choosing, and in many instances, they resulted in registration.

Although most parents had given some thought to the schools and had, at times, shown strong preferences or rejected certain types of schools, their choice process was such that they often found themselves unable to maneuver, and having to comply with market realities – they registered their children to the one 'default option' school, that was able to offer them a place:

> *Rani: Why do you call your study parental choice? Choice requires more than one option – we had just one option, and even that, we were lucky that at the last moment a place became available and they had places for both of them (Casual conversation no. 157).*

> *Karen: I would not send my kids there if I had another alternative – the school is way too religious for us. But I didn't. That was our only option (Interview no. 34).*

Thus, it may be claimed that these families did not compete in the main educational marketplace, since the prime-market is only active for particular age groups and when mass movements occur throughout the system. Missing out on the main market-action, these families were confined to a residual or auxiliary, educational 'musical chairs' market; an inferior market that did not offer access to popular schools since these were fully occupied as a result of the prime-market movements. Consequently, they had to find schools with 'empty seats' and compete for those, while other schools were simply inaccessible. This highlights their disadvantaged positioning as outsiders-disconnected choosers.

Working within the boundaries of the auxiliary 'musical chairs' market meant, in many cases, that they had no choice and therefore no voice (Hirschman 1970); that is, their considerations for choice, educational preferences or child matching practices were irrelevant and as demonstrated in the quotes above they were often disregarded and set aside in face of these harsh market realities.

In what follows, I shall break down their information accumulation process in an attempt to assess how their resources, or the lack of these, affected their negotiation with this residual educational marketplace.

Trivial pursuits

The analysis of the information gathering practices that this group of choosers displayed, suggests that these parents differed from the other groups in their ability to access information, which is perhaps self-evident, given that they were conducting their inquiries from abroad. This affected the volume of information available to them, which was relatively limited, both in terms of the number of schools they examined and the aspects of schools being observed:

> *Gilli: I didn't really know much about the school. I've been told that many Israelis chose Alton. So I didn't bother to look further (Casual conversation no. 33).*

This family was offered information about one school, and concomitantly, examined and registered their children in that school. This was, in fact, a typical situation among these families, and especially among expatriates and other sojourners, who often followed their predecessors' footsteps or informants' advice with little further inquiry. Their lack of inclination to engage with the market, may be explained by the length of stay they aspired to (Weiner 1996): evidently, if these expatriates and sojourners anticipate returning home in few years time, and adopt a 'temporary' state of mind, then, they are not likely to want to invest in long-term educational planning, and thus comfortably follow the educational path laid by their compatriots.

Another aspect of the information available to this group was its relatively lower level of complexity than that obtained or offered to the other groups. In the following conversation a veteran parent is responding to a request for information. Note that the veteran parent supplies the required information, and at the same time addresses the 'gaps' in the enquirer's knowledge by supplying the trivial details required, such as information on the area, transportation arrangement, registration policies, etc.:

Limor: Parkway is a Jewish school; it's in Arlington area. Do you know where that is?
Dana: No.
Limor: It is north to Hill View Gardens area, here, I'll show you on the A-Z. It's a Jewish area, lots of Jewish families there, but very few Israelis.
Dana: Do we have to live in the area to get in?

Limor: No. There are many Israeli kids there, almost 30% of the school, and none of them live in that area. There is organised transportation to the school.
Dana: How orthodox is it? We're totally secular.
Limor: I wouldn't worry about that, most of the kids come from secular families, and they've got at least 4-5 Israeli kids in each class. Which year is she going to?
Dana: In Israel she would have gone to class D.
Limor: Here she'll probably go into year 5. Maybe 6. Depends on her date of birth. I can tell you from my own experience – both my kids were there – it's a very good school (Casual conversation no. 86).

This type of conversation was a characteristic information gathering dialogue between veteran parents and international choosers. The comparison between the groups has shown that the more experienced choosers rarely sought this type of elementary information, and because their starting point in the information gathering exercise was conducted from a higher plane, that which stands on a more solid knowledge base, its level of complexity was also much greater.

This leads to the second theme discussed here: knowledge.

Faulty towers

Knowledge occurs in the interviewees' accounts as a cognitive resource that embodies the basic common-sense cognition and understanding of the school system: its structure, history, policies, procedures, curriculum, teaching methods, norms, values, terminology and indeed all day-to-day functions. Most of the choosers in this category displayed a significant deficit in knowledge, often missing on the most basic trivialities of the system:

> *Talma: I wasn't aware that at the age of 4 she would go to school, so I actually searched for a nursery first until someone told me (Interview no. 31).*

> *Eldad: I remember how we thought at the beginning that 'public schools' were state schools. We told him (a British acquaintance RH) that we wanted to send the kids to a public school, and he just looked at us with a funny look as if we grew a tail (Casual conversation no. 128)*

During the years that I have spent in the field I have heard and often answered questions that displayed the international choosers' lack of basic knowledge. Among these were questions such as: 'can you explain about the GCSE's and A-Level exams?'; 'is the junior school like the junior-high school in Israel?'; 'where do you register to schools?'; 'what is the difference between infant, junior, primary and elementary school?'; 'what is a Voluntary Aided school?'; 'what is a voluntary contribution?'; 'where can you get a child with SEN assessed?", 'what do they mean by 'ex-grammar' school?'.

These are some examples of the cavities in the international choosers' knowledge; as illustrated, some of these applied to the most basic functions, terms, structures and procedures of the education system, including, importantly, the resources that could potentially improve their initial level of knowledge, that is, knowledge about the agencies that provide information, and the types of information that are routinely published for the use of choosers.

In addition, most interviewees admitted they were not aware of the choice policies in operation, nor of 'the rules of the market':

Adina: I wasn't aware that there was a choice system, I thought it was a catchment area system like in Israel, so, I looked for a school, and then rented a house next to it.
Rona: So when did you become aware of it?
Adina: (laughing) Only when you started talking about your research (Casual conversation no. 143).

Linda: If we get one child in, then the other jumps the queue to become the first on the waiting list for his age group? Urr why didn't I know this beforehand! Meadway offered her a place but I said no, because they didn't have a place for him as well.
Dorit: You are telling us that it is OK to register the child to many schools? And they know? (Research diary 22.10.01, Annual Veterans Welcoming Newcomers Meeting).

This type of knowledge deficit may be explained by Edwards, Fitz and Whitty's (1989) concept of 'educational inheritance', which encompasses the type of slowly accumulated knowledge that native born parents have, that comes from 'going through the system'. Edwards, Fitz and Whitty (1989) claim that parents

who own the 'right' kind of educational inheritance are the ones whose children are educated and socialised in the same educational system as they were. These parents possess a coherent body of knowledge of the educational system, its history, policies, rules, terminology, bureaucracy and procedures, the schools and the other educational agencies, as well as the knowledge of the information that is available and how it may be obtained. Thus, they are able to 'work' the system, and make sense of it in a way that the international choosers quoted here cannot.

Additionally, what transpired from these accounts, and in fact, emerged from what was unspoken by the parents in this group, was the ways in which the lack of knowledge base interfered with their information gathering exercise. Knowledge provides a foundation that enables both the search for and the assimilation of new information. Without it, these parents found it difficult to define what are their informational needs. If, for example choosers do not know that Jewish state schools exist, they cannot search for information about these schools. If they do not understand what GCSEs or SATs exams are, then the league tables have no meaning. Moreover, if they are not aware of the rules that underlie the choice process they cannot define their landscapes of choice.

However, the lack of 'educational inheritance' was not only an absent perceptual structure for these immigrant parents, but a flawed cognitive foundation. These parents seem to carry in their minds their foreign educational inheritance, which defined for them 'how things work', and thus framed and structured their expectations from the system. Being unaware of the differences between the two systems, they often found themselves puzzled, confused or annoyed by what they discovered:

Nirit: What is the deal with these nurseries? How can mothers work in this country with this half-day arrangement? What do they expect me to do for the first 4 months of the year? (Her child has been accepted to half-day nursery in the January intake. There is no such arrangement in Israel, RH).
Liora: (Comparing the schools' yearly plans of her children's primary and secondary schools RH): Each school starts the year and finishes it, and take these half term vacations at different times!! We'll never get to

take a family vacation this way! (In Israel, there is a unitary timetable for all schools, RH).
Gila: If he does not pass the GCSEs then he cannot do to the A-level exams? What do they do if that happens? (There are no intermediary bottle-necks in the secondary school system in Israel leading to the Baccalaureate exams. RH).
Alon: I don't get this Jewish state school and this VA stuff – if the parents are paying for Hebrew and Jewish studies – how can they rely on voluntary contribution to pay for these? What if not enough parents pay? (No such voluntary payment system in Israel, RH.).
Dalia: How do working parents survive all these half term holidays? (School holidays are coordinated with national holidays in Israel, RH).
(Research diary 22.10.01, Annual Veterans Welcoming Newcomers Meeting).

Some attempted to use their foreign knowledge in their decision making process, which was, at times, misleading:

Talma: Single sex schools - does this mean that they are religious schools? (In Israel, single-sex schools exist only in the Orthodox religious school sector, RH) (Casual conversation no. 86).

Bracha: I was quite surprised to learn that there were Jewish state schools here – I thought all Jewish schools were privately funded, like in America. (Interview no. 40).

Adina: I thought that all Jewish schools here were more orthodox, something like the state-religious stream in Israel, so, I didn't even consider them (Interview no. 24).

The most distinct display of the parents' foreign educational inheritance was found in the reports made by families who flew to Britain to visit the schools on a pre-arrival visit. In these accounts, the parents' foreign educational inheritance and cultural lens through which they perceived the schools often propelled them to misread or misinterpret 'the writing on the wall':

Eti: The climate in that school, how shall I put it? It is like an army camp there. Even the walls show it: the kids' works of art on the wall were straightened like in an army march. There was no imagination in that school, no soul! (Casual conversation no. 38).

Adam: The child stood there wearing his iron uniform, with that tie choking his soul, and he looked so tamed, and I thought: no way my daughters are going there (Interview no. 1).

Gila (PE teacher, RH): I was quite surprised that the teacher taught all subjects, even PE – it seems to me very unprofessional (Interview no. 3).

Karen (Teacher in a junior high school, RH): they teach in that school only by frontal methods! I find that very old fashioned. We have moved ages ago to interactive group methods (Interview no. 34).

These middle-class parents were bringing to the table their intuitive ability to sense the nuances of the school's environment and assess the schools' instrumental and expressive aspects (Ball 2003a; Bourdieu 1986a; Bernstein 1975). However, in this case their middle-class vision was entangled with their homeland culture, and thus, although they were able to discern the signs – such as the school's disciplinary practices, the climate, the staff's work regime, the teaching methods, the art work on the walls - they misinterpreted them. In these accounts, what might count as 'signs of a good school' to a British middle-class parent, was interpreted as 'too strict' or 'too old fashioned', indeed, not a desired school by these parents. Here the respondents' middle-class cultural capital did not compensate for their lack in local knowledge, since it was enmeshed with their homeland culture.

One important aspect of the information and knowledge available to this group of choosers is the language in which it was communicated. I shall address this next.

Symbolic concessions

In comparing the three groups of choosers as to their language and communicative practices, I was surprised to discover that the group that felt most vulnerable in the education marketplace and agonised about their own deficient language skills, was not the international choosers analysed here, but rather, the newcomers, who were embarking on their second choice process while their children were already enrolled in local schools. Even when prompted, only few respondents (n=4) were able to recount incidents where their English language skills affected their international choice process, and these notes mainly addressed the complexity of the schools' registration forms.

There can be two explanations of this finding:

One possible explanation is the time lapse between the choice process and the interview. Further, it may well be that these parents disregarded past language difficulties, either because these were not significant generally, or they did not perceive these difficulties as a factor that has affected their initial choice process. A second possible explanation, and perhaps the more probable, could be that because these families were conducting their choice process prior to their relocation, that is, before their children engaged with local schools on a daily basis, and since most of the information was collected through a Hebrew speaking intermediary figure who often shouldered the entire registration process, their direct communications with the schools or with any other English speaking organisation were minimal.

Their narratives also suggest that only after their arrival to London and when their children attended the schools, did they begin to recognise the influence of language deficit on the different domains of their lives and indeed on subsequent educational choice processes. Further probing into their direct pre-enrolment interaction with the schools has shown that these conversations were few and relatively basic, and took place over the phone, in writing (registration forms / letters), when visiting the schools and when submitting registration forms.

As noted earlier, this group of families relied heavily on their Hebrew speaking immigration networks, as they retrieved information about the education market. Indeed, they rarely had other sources of information available to them and more typically, the Israeli network available to them was limited to few families. Analysing their choice process retrospectively, some parents acknowledged the role of their informants in relieving the initial difficulties of cross-cultural communication with the schools:

> *Renni: Here, everything takes us longer than what we are used to, because we need to plan every conversation beforehand. I remember this stage where I kept putting off things, such as phone calls, to the bank, to the council, to the school, etc. It's very helpful to have all these friends*

around you who can make these 'short cuts' for you by supplying the information you require without a hassle (Interview no. 7).

This quote suggests that by using the familiar language and discursive codes, throughout the information-gathering period, the ethnic Hebrew-speaking network enabled its members a less painful, 'hassle-free' encounter with the schools. However, rendering symbolic concessions was but one of the functions of the ethnic network. I shall elaborate on this next.

Communal webs

One of the most striking features in this research was the dominance of the families' networks in the choice process: all three groups of choosers interacted with their networks, however, each group has occupied a different position in this web of ties, each had access to different portions of the network, and the level of dependence on their informants varied between the least skilled and more experienced choosers (Ball and Vincent 1998).

The stories of the international choosers analysed here were particularly intriguing: as the accounts quoted above illustrate, it was difficult to find transcripts where parents did not portray or discuss their compatriots' connection, that is, their ties with other Israelis, whether non-migrants, returnees or immigrants already residing in London. Almost every report on and observation of the choice process indicated the presence, the enterprise, the constitution and the temperament of these nationally based but internationally spread web of ties, and their significance in the educational decision-making process at the point of relocation. Further, as shown earlier, this groups' access to formal sources of information was limited, and thus their London based ethnic networks, were their cardinal source of information, and most often, they were the only type of social capital available to them. Indeed, this group demonstrates the long-standing argument made by network analysts (Burt 1992), who claim that in the absence of more reliable information and when faced with the risks entailed in disinformation and misinformation, networks disseminate information often in the forms of rumour and gossip, in an attempt

to replenish the void. More importantly, their intensive interaction with the ethnic network demonstrates the significance of social capital in their lives at the point of relocation (Zhou and Bankston 1994; Portes 1998; Gold 2001).

In analysing the structural characteristics of the networks (Burt 2000) accessible by international choosers, and especially their links with the ethnic community in London, three themes emerged from the data: the first relates to their **network's size**, querying to what extend the size of the network available to these choosers mattered; the second surveys the **location** of the interacting individuals, and the third examines the **potency of these ties**.

A portrait of a network

The interviewees' accounts suggest that the number of informants approached by this group of choosers, who were capable of offering relevant schooling information, was relatively modest; often only one or two informants were accessed and most of the information was obtained through these brokers:

> *Ben: We had Israeli friends who lived in Hamilton area and sent their children to Hamilton and they were very pleased with it (Interview no. 2).*

> *Orna: I have a (Israeli) friend who lives here more than 10 years. She sent her kids to Parkway and recommended it to us. We called the school, but it was full, so my friend gave us the phone number of Naomi (an Israel estate agent, RH). Do you know her? She found this house for us. Anyway, we called her, and she said that the best option would be Alton. She said many Israelis attend this school, and said she would try and find us a house within a walking distance. And so she did. She gave us Alton's phone number, and we called (Interview no. 11).*

One of the interesting dimensions of immigration networks is its capacity to cross national borders (Faist 2000; Gold 2001). This capability came to light in the examination of the location of both parties; the choosers and information brokers. Among this category there were variety of situations, but the most common was where the information was communicated internationally, between prospective immigrants during their pre-arrival period and veteran emigrants residing in London. In some cases, particularly among expatriates, the information provider was a returnee or the about-to-return predecessor.

The third dimension of the immigration networks was the type of relationships and the strength of the associations through which information was gleaned (Granovetter 1973). The interviewees' reports illustrate that their information providers were mainly friends, friends of friends, neighbours, prospective or current colleagues as well as more distant associates such as an Israeli estate-agent based in London or previously-unknown newly acquired acquaintances:

> *Adina: When Ariel came here to look for a house he went with Dalia the estate agent to look at some houses and she was really helpful, and first she took him to Riverway school, which was closer to the house she showed him, but it was full. So she drove him to Meadway, and luckily they had one place and he got in immediately (Interview no. 24).*
>
> *Rita: I had the details of a woman that I didn't know: I was told (by her husband's work colleagues RH) to call her and she would know. Her name was Relli. I didn't get to meet her since we arrived, so I don't really know her. I called her and she gave me a few names (of schools and kindergartens RH) and recommended two in particular (Interview no. 6).*

The findings indicate that the ties in operation were mostly what Granovetter (1973) defines as 'weak ties', that is, ties that are relatively distant, sporadic, superficial, casual, loosely coupled and uncommitted. Thus, access to London based informants, were often tricky: although a few had close friends or relatives residing in London and capable of providing the required information, most did not, and thus had to network among their families, friends, colleagues and acquaintances in the homeland in search of another intermediate-contact (mostly a returnee) who could then connect them to London based informants. This type of networking is recognized as 'bridging' by network analysts (Burt 1992).

This links with the class aspect of the choice process: similar to Ball and Vincent's (1998) findings, the international choosers located informants within distinct sections of their immigration network, which corresponded with their particular class segment. For example, the more affluent families were networking among those with similar financial resources and accordingly, retrieved information mainly on fee-paying schools. Lower middle-class families networked within their stratum, and were offered information mainly on state

schools. Expatriates mostly communicated with other expatriates; academics typically corresponded with other scholars, and religious families were able to track families with similar levels of religiosity. Each group was referred to schools that matched their cultural, financial or other class resources:

> *Aviva (representative wife RH): We considered Newhaven, Holiwell-Bay and Tollrpath (all independent RH). Then the kids heard that at Tollerpath he will have to wear a kippah and she would have to wear a skirt – they just crossed it out. So we were left with two options – well, not really because at Newhaven you have to register the kids when you are pregnant – so I was 13 and 10 years late. So we were left with Holliwell Bay, which we heard such good things about, and that is where we took them.*
> *Rona: How did you know about these schools?*
> *Aviva: Well, my next-door neighbour, she was an expatriate in (an EU country) so she knew some expatriate-returnees from Britain and made some inquiries for us (Interview no. 45).*

Indeed, who these families knew both in Israel and in Britain, their line of work, where they lived (in Israel), and which circuits they and their extended families belong to both socially and professionally, were vital factors in determining the families' access to different strands of the immigration network, each of which transmitted different types of information which reflected the particular educational and cultural requirements, concerns, priorities as well as financial capacities. By tapping into the correct class stratum in their initial contacts with the education marketplace, these parents ensured that their post-migration 'slotting' in terms of schooling was appropriate, thus compensating for their disadvantaged standing in terms of other resources. However, it should also be noted here that there were indeed some deviations from this class-matched networking.

As these parents were activating and manipulating their networking talents in an attempt to locate the appropriate brokers of information, they were erecting new bridges between their closest circles and distant ones in order to locate what were to them weak ties and remote links (Burt 2000). Nonetheless, they were unaware of the London based ethnic-network into which they were tapping, whose features may impact the type of information that circulated both within and outside of its boundaries. In the analysis presented later, I shall discuss

some of the features of the ethnic community from the veterans' perspective. Among these reports of the community's grapevine, high-density, strong-ties and network closure featured strongly. One of the main characteristics of the information circulated in tightly-knit networks is that news is likely to disperse more quickly through them, yet, a network of dense, strong ties will rarely disseminate news that is really new, and are more likely to transmit overlapping rather than additive information (Burt 2000; Faist 2000). This may mean that international choosers who tap into the London based Israeli community were likely to retrieve similar information from different informants. Therefore, in a sense, size did not matter; whether one or many informants were accessed, the information was likely to be fairly similar in content.

Transit platforms

Here I shall display some of the benefits and resources attained through the families' associations, and analyse the role of the ethnic community in London in providing these commodities to international choosers. This feature of the network, which records the network's returns, clarifies the ways in which social capital operates; how ties convert into other assets, thus facilitating the pursuit of individual or communal goals (Bourdieu 1986b; Coleman 1988).

Earlier I analysed the main resources that international choosers secured through their links with their London based ethnic intra-net, that is, knowledge and information on schools and the choice process. Yet, the focus on schooling topics concealed the broad picture which detailed the assistance, support and information that these families were offered in a variety of domains, including housing, employment, finance, health, welfare, education, recreation, transportation and more:

Sharona: Someone who was a representative of Orex (pseudonymous computer company, RH), he opened the door for us. Roy met with him and came out with a paper summarising everything we needed to do – where to buy a car, where to rent a house, which bank to go to, where is the NHS office, how to register the kids to schools, everything, so Roy came here a few weeks before the rest of us and completed the registration (Interview no. 32).

This type of assistance was often recorded by migration researchers (Gold 2001; Zhou and Bankston 1997). Here, the London-based information brokers shouldered an intermediary position in the network, by providing the information required and by defining the information that may be needed, and pointing to other sources of information. Further, by shouldering these tasks these informants assumed a crucial role in outlining and reassembling the newcomers' knowledge foundation in these domains.

Supplying information and knowledge was not the only gain these choosers obtained through their compatriots' network. On many occasions, practical assistance was also offered and accepted:

> *Dana: My friend really took care of us. She organised everything – she went to the school and got the brochure and the school's newspaper, and she did the registration for us. I remember the school's newspaper she sent us, there was an article there about which secondary schools the graduates were going to, which meant nothing to me then, but my friend said that she could see it was a good school because they were continuing to prestigious schools (Interview no. 9).*

Handling the registration process on behalf of the newly arriving families was one type of assistance offered in relation to the school choice process. Other types of intermediary aid included: searching for details and phone numbers (or web sites) of other contacts, of schools and LEAs; contacting schools or LEAs and retrieving registration forms, brochures and other printed material (newsletters, forms, lists of schools, lists of nurseries and child minders, etc); scheduling school visits and escorting parents during school visits; translating or negotiating on behalf of families during meetings; forwarding schools' requests and written correspondence to the families, as well as driving families to schools for a school visit or during the first days of school.

The role that veterans assumed here was that of middlemen (Wellman and Wortley 1990): they interfaced between international choosers and the schools in a variety of ways, thus enabling these families a smoother contact with the schools facilitated by a more experienced and skilled chooser. At the same time, by offering this type of assistance veterans actively restricted the

international choosers' landscapes of choice to particular schools with which they were in contact and therefore able to render such assistance. This was where the downside of social capital (Portes and Landolt 1990) began to surface.

An additional privilege that parents in this category of choosers obtained from the ethnic networks was access to the ethnic community in London (Faist 2000). As noted earlier, the actions taken by the families described here occurred mainly prior to their relocation, and thus their links with the London based ethnic community were yet to be established. At that point, however, most did not possess the fundamental knowledge of the community that would enable them to access it or establish connections with its members. The role that their first contacts shouldered was therefore that of bridge building, between the intending immigrants and members of the ethnic community in London, thus enabling newly arrived families to expand their social capital.

In many information-seeking conversations that these families have had with veterans residing in London, they were referred by their first contacts to other community members for further assistance and information. Some of these 'second referees' were parents whose children attended the desired schools, but many were referred to professionals in the community who could provide content- specific advice that was in their line of work. In the educational domain these included the Israeli kindergartens, supplementary school and high-school staff, teachers employed in local schools, tutors, SEN specialists and child psychologists, school-transportation organisers, nannies and child-minders, providers of children's afternoon classes and play-schemes.

In tune with the variety of domains in which information and assistance was offered, second referees were also of various professions and areas of expertise, such as solicitors, estate agents, car sale or rental companies, telecommunication companies, hotel or bed-and-breakfast managers, medical doctors, taxi drivers, and many others. Among these were business owners and

top rank managers who were approached by parents in this category as potential job providers.

Two types of social capital emerge in these referral reports: the first points to the **human capital** (Borjas 1999) of the ethnic community in London, which defines the combined educational and occupational standing of the community. The referral accounts made by this group of choosers demonstrate both the variety of professions and employment positions of community members, as well as the occupational niches the ethnic community has come to occupy over the years. These findings indicate the presence of a 'migration industry' (Light and Gold 2000), which consists of immigration lawyers, estate agents, hotel owners, and other middlemen who offer services to newcomers. The second type of social capital exposed through these narratives was the community's **ethnic capital** (Borjas 1999), which consists of the culture, language, attitudes and opportunities that members of the group share. Here the theme that loomed was the 'culture of migration' that has evolved among community members, which legitimised emigration and the provision of support for newly arriving immigrants (Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1997); a legitimation that stands in contrast to the homeland's negative value surrounding emigration. Together, these capitals characterise the ethnic environment that newcomers draw on for assistance, and the opportunities and resources that become available to them as a result of their ethnic ties.

The three types of intermediary work detailed here, that is, the **pragmatic assistance in interfacing** between the families and the schools, the **cognitive restructuring of the newcomers' knowledge**, and the **social-capital bridge-building onto the ethnic community** and its immigration industry, illustrate Wellman and Wortley's (1990) proposition that social networks mediate between public and private fields by supporting and equipping people for their engagement in the public domain, and by balancing between personal interests and concerns and public affairs. With reference to the particular types of mediating functions that migration networks offer, Gold (2001) claims that ethnic communities often function as intermediary bodies that facilitate the immigration

process, and thus, migrants' access to their ethnic communities, can be crucial in interpreting and functioning in what is to the newly arriving migrants an unfamiliar and potentially hazardous terrain. In his studies on Israeli immigrants relocating to the USA, Gold (1994; 1995; 2000) details the ways in which these families made use of their ties with co-nationals in order to ease their transition process. His findings demonstrate that these networks serve as moderators in the immigration process and are capable of reducing the financial and emotional costs of international migration and cultural marginality. Thus, he maintains, these ties can function as a resource, which is capable of increasing individuals' autonomy, and as a vehicle through which social constraints may be escaped. Furthermore, these networks are capable of encouraging or discouraging chain-migration to specific locations. Castles and Miller (1998) explain that this may occur when the web of connections transforms into more institutionalised structures, and when these reach a threshold level where they amount to an autonomous social structure that promotes the independence of migratory flows.

Faist (2000) confirms that the type of networking evidenced among this group of choosers, together with the migration industry and culture of migration that has evolved in this London-based ethnic community, are a common phenomena in immigrant communities worldwide. He maintains that these ties and arrangements, where available, erect a meso level structure, indeed, a transit platform, that bridges between the old and the new.

Subliminal messages: the embrace

In analysing the meso structure 'transit platform' that veteran immigrants have erected for the benefit of newcomers, what comes to light are not only the perceptible endowments rendered through it (knowledge and information, interfacing between families and schools, and links to the ethnic community), but also the sub-contexts of these exchanges: the 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1979) that characterise the ethnic community in London and its interaction with newly arriving immigrants.

The narratives in which the parents in this category revealed their perceptions of the veterans' charitable assistance draw attention to three themes: the first is the **generosity, care and concern** that loomed through the veterans' actions and discourses; the second theme conveys the international choosers' **dependence** on their veteran compatriots and the **trust** these newly arrived immigrants displayed in their helpers' advice; and the third, addresses the **'membering'** undertone of the interaction between these choosers and their fellow immigrants, in which the choosers' sense of belonging and sense of place came to light.

The first, and perhaps the most evident theme that emerged from the parents' narratives detailing their pre-arrival engagement with the ethnic community in London, was the care, concern and generosity that surfaced through the veterans' willingness to provide information and assistance, to devote time, energy, as well as other personal, familial or communal resources, and utilise their networks for the benefit of others. It should be reminded here that the veterans' ties with these prospective migrants, at that point, were weak, distant, occasional and uncommitted (Granovetter 1973). The veterans' willingness to assist newcomers indeed raise some questions as to their motivations, questions that I shall address later, however, from the international choosers' perspective, the subliminal messages of generosity and good will were unmistakable:

> *Adam: When we arrived here we had two friends who lived here. They were not really what I would call 'our best friends' beforehand, but from my point of view, they went far beyond what was expected of them to make our life easier. This help was worth to me much more than it cost them. They helped us with information, small services, and more than that, socially: although we just arrived we were not alone. This is very important. Very. It wasn't important how 'deep' this friendship was, it was more important simply to have a friend. David came to pick us from the airport, in the middle of the night, with a thermos with coffee and cookies. Later, Varda took Sari to Safeway and gave her a tour at the local shopping center. She explained all about the school system and took us to visit Alton. We experienced the difficulties of absorption as very minor thanks to our friends (Interview no. 1).*

What might seem as an exceptional display of kindness and investment in these weak and uncommitted relationship, was in fact a common manifestation of one of the fundamental ideals of the Israeli culture: the friendship ethos. And this is where the respondents' homeland culture can be utilised to explicate their actions, as one of the interviewees clarified:

> *Adam: I think we are unique in the way we relate to each other, and the way we help one another, the sort of communal responsibility we all have. Yes, well there is also the 'friendship ethos' which seems to be very much there. I mean, we were born and raised in a country were people risked their lives and often died for others (Interview no. 1).*

Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1994) argue that social networks originate from people's cultural scripts and are produced by their social positions and backgrounds. In this case, 'the cultural script' was generated from a shared friendship ethos and communal ideals, which were the central values in the Israeli nation-building philosophy, as well as a strong value within the Jewish culture. Furthermore, these messages were articulated in Hebrew, a language that underscores the primacy of the collective voice (Katriel 1991). Although recent studies of the Israeli society indicate a gradual change from collectivistic to individualistic values, Katriel (1991) argues that the strong accent on community remains a central theme in the Israeli discourse. As found in other studies of Israeli immigrant communities (Sabar 2000; Gold 1994) this cultural undertone seems to shape the communal discourses of Israelis who live abroad:

> *Sharona: At the beginning, every information we needed came from Israelis - mainly from the school. Today they are still our main source of information and any help we require, and now we're in a position where we give out the same sort of help to others (Interview no. 32).*

LeVine (1984) argues that in cultures, as structures of shared meanings, some nuances are more lucid than others. The meaning of this type of collaborative discourse is clear to the Israeli parents, reflecting their homeland culture and its value system and displaying its profound communal spirit through its strong sense of mutual commitment, care and support. Thus, as shown in the quotes above, this type of discourse enabled newcomers to rapidly become absorbed in the local structure of feeling within the community, conform to its underlying

ideology, and in time, take part in reproducing it.

The charitable actions described previously together with the structure of feeling of generosity, care and concern, relate to the next theme that seems to dominate the relationships between the international choosers and the veterans: dependence and trust (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993b). The reports made by the parents in this category exposed the relative dependence of this group of choosers on their veteran informants: having a slender network and limited access to alternative sources of information, meant that these parents were completely reliant on their (often sole) broker for information and had little opportunity corroborate or substantiate the validity of the information received or its applicability to their own circumstances. Furthermore, given their poor knowledge foundation, they were unable to apply any kind of critique on the contents of the information they received, its extensiveness, sufficiency, accuracy or depth. Being subjected to an act of charity, especially one that comes with an emotionally embracing message of care and concern, they tended to accept the information and advice provided, with gratitude, but at face value, and often acted accordingly.

What the actions of this group of choosers displayed was trust in their informants and this often conveyed the high level of reliability they attached to the information received (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993b). As Ball and Vincent (1998) demonstrate, those choosers that tend to perceive grapevine knowledge as trustworthy and highly reliable are often those who are less skilled and less confident choosers. Because they are unable to access and decode other sources of information, they tend to seek reassurance from those who they perceive to be more informed or authoritative in these matters. This suggests that the more dependent the group is on their networks – the more likely they are to display trust in their informants, and perceive the information they are offered as reliable.

This leads to the main subconscious communication exposed here: membering.

Membering

The third theme that surfaced through the narratives cited above and the most influential subconscious message communicated to newcomers by their veterans' compatriots, either through their discourses, or through their charitable actions was that of 'membering', that is, a message that conveys the strong sense of group membership, mutual accountability and common fate, that interviewees seem to share.

The 'membering' message imparted to this group of choosers may be divided into two parts: the first, communicated to these newly arrived migrants that they were not alone in coping with the difficulties of international relocation, and indeed, others have been through it, and survived it. The second message conveyed the spirit of the community, that is, that there was a community that they belong to, that shared their experiences, and cared for their well being. These motifs were especially lucid in times of crisis, such as the Catch 22 situation described earlier, and were voiced in the reports made by parents (n=8) who perceived the school choice process as a stressful and tension provoking event:

> *Gila: The first weeks were really hectic. There was so much to do: find a house, buy a car, open a bank account, unpack the things, etc, you know how it is, and on top of list of 'things to do' there was* ***the school****: finding a school, finding the 'right' school for them. And what is 'right' for children who don't speak a word of English??? I didn't know, and didn't have time to do a Doctorate on the subject. It was simply frustrating (Interview no. 3).*

Ball and Vincent (1998) maintain that the choice process presents challenges to most families and is often seen by native-born parents as a stressful event in the family's life. For the international choosers quoted here, the stress over the choice of school emanated from two different directions: firstly, school choice was but one of many tension-provoking issues that needed to be addressed and settled, and thus it was often de-prioritised, an action that provoked guilt and anxiety among these parents (Ball 2003a). Secondly, as seen in the above quote, much of the pressure stemmed from the need to define 'the right school' for the individual child, that is, to engage in educational matching between the

child and the prospective school. However, under these particular relocation circumstances, and given the parents' ignorance of the educational market, they were unable to discern the 'right' schools from the 'wrong' ones, and, at the same time, they were incapable of characterising their children's educational needs as upcoming migrants. Being in a position of ignorance and impotence, in concert with their inability to bear their 'normal' parental responsibilities provoked a deep sense of inadequacy, guilt, dread and stress. Under these conditions, the psychological support rendered through the veterans' membering actions was of particular significance.

Through the engagement with the ethnic network parents experienced a sense of control over a stressful situation, and felt more confident about their own choices, which were confirmed by the opinions and choices of those who were perceived as 'one of us' and 'who went through this':

> *Ornit: I was told by my husband's colleague that 'all the (Israeli) children of expatriates and representatives go to Parkway, as if there was only one school in London. So we called Parkway and registered the kids. At that point we didn't have the luxury of spare time. But, it didn't really bother me. I thought, well, my children are no different than any other normal (Israeli) kids, if all the others have managed - so will mine (Interview no. 17).*

These quotations highlight the perceived reliability of the ethnic network as a source of information. These networks provided what may be perceived as 'the right type of information', a type of information that is relevant for 'people like us' who are going through a unique process in their lives: international migration. For the quoted interviewee, choosing a school where other Israeli kids have managed, reduced feelings of loneliness, of 'coping with this all alone' and restored a sense of 'normality'. And this is also where the newcomers' trust in the veterans' choices was revealed:

> *Rita: I heard that many Israelis went to Alton, so I didn't really look further. Israelis wouldn't choose a bad school (Casual conversation no. 11).*

> *Dina: We knew very little then. Alton was close by so that's where we went. There were many Israelis there so we assumed that if they approved it, it was OK (Casual conversation no. 4).*

There seemed to be a common assumption amongst the choosers that the

schools chosen by other Israelis offered satisfactory education. Choosing a school where other Israelis have not only 'survived' but 'have done well' or 'excelled', offered parents a sense of assurance:

> *Tali: All the parents I know are very satisfied with Broadwalk. My Danit is flourishing, both socially and academically (Casual conversation no. 190).*

The 'membering', modeling and confirmation messages that veterans communicated to international choosers through their advice and help and by pointing out and directing them to the communal schooling path, were vital in restoring their psychological balance during the transition period.

The engagement with the Israeli ethnic networks in London rendered parents many emotional benefits as they performed the function of 'membering'. The use of the Hebrew language and its cooperative discursive codes, throughout the process of choice functioned as a unifying tool, encouraging parents to cling to the reliable and familiar Hebrew speaking networks, and to follow the education route previously validated by experienced veteran parents. While the newly arrived rapidly immersed in this collaborative talk, veterans assumed a central role in introducing newcomers to the network, reproducing this pattern of intra-communal dependence and its typical discourses. This role, and the veterans' powerful positions as 'the knowledgeable and experienced helpers', may explain the veterans' motivation to engage in these relationships and assist newcomers. Yet, by merely assuming this role and this type of knowledgeable, experienced and authoritative discourse, and by highlighting their shared educational route, veterans stressed the reliability of the ethnic network as a source of assistance and thus encouraged newcomers to follow the communal schooling route.

Indeed, the membering messages described here had an exceptional effect on the international choosers' educational decision making: it encouraged the newly arrived to follow the 'beaten' educational path leading to certain communally favourite schools, and this gave rise to this group's clustering in education. This leads to the next theme: channelling.

Channelling

One of the most intriguing themes related to the roles that the immigration network assumed in relation to the international choosers analysed here was that of 'channelling'. This theme describes the ways in which the London based ethnic community promoted chain-transitions of newly arrived families to communal schools, thereby advancing ethnic clustering in these schools.

In the previous sections I presented different features of the London based ethnic network as they were perceived and described by international choosers during their pre-arrival period. Among these, the small size of the network available to this group of choosers and the feeble, uncommitted and unorganised nature of these ties, figured pungently. Even though structurally frail, the analysis of the rewards and gains accrued through these relationships demonstrated the potency of these ties, which came to light in their ability to erect transit platforms that facilitated the relocation process of the newly arrived migrants, mainly by shouldering a range of intermediary and supportive roles. The argument highlighted here, claimed by migration researchers (Gold 2000; Faist 2000) is that these ties are capable of promoting international chain-migration between certain destinations. This claim links with the main argument presented in this section, which maintains that the ethnic network described here continually promoted chain-transitions to particular communal schools, thus maintaining and regenerating ethnic clustering in education. The research question that comes to mind here is how could a network of slim, feeble, casual and spontaneous relations become so compelling as to sustain a perpetual channelling system? The answer to this question can shed light on the ways in which migration networks support and promote international migratory flows between countries, and the ways in which newly arrived immigrants find their way into their co-national's communities thus causing these to expand and develop.

This section is therefore not about a feature of the ethnic network available to this group of choosers, but about its outcomes – how it has affected the

international choosers' decision making. The essence of this section is about network power; the network's capability to reroute people's lives in certain directions. The main findings suggest that the ethnic network's influence on its newly arrived members occurred through the roles they assumed in the construction of the choosers' landscapes of choice, that is, their involvement in generating the newcomers' mental image of the educational market. As demonstrated earlier, the horizons of this mental image were particularly confined, often including only few communally favoured schools. The channelling system thus emerged, for this group of choosers, as a corollary of this cognitive-reconstruction work. My main aim in this section is to demonstrate the ways in which social networks imprint and impact upon the construction of such mental picture, and how this image featured in the parents' decision making process, resulting, in most cases, in the affirmation of the communal path, and its reinvention by the newly arrived families.

The accounts suggest that the construction of the international choosers' landscapes of choice was mainly a consequence of the choosers' state of need and the significance of the intermediary roles their ethnic networks shouldered. As seen in previous sections, the ethnic network controlled both the reconstruction of their compatriots' knowledge and the junctions of information, effectively confining the type and amounts of information available to members of this group. This cognitive manipulation generated among the recipients a mental map of the locality and of the schooling system, which was restricted to schools that were habitually chosen by Israelis and perceived as 'the right schools'. By managing the information circulated within the network, the access of community members to these schools was controlled and the communal pattern of schooling was reproduced:

> *Ruth: There was a time where newcomers went to 'Castle' (real estate agency) for a house, and if Nira was there she would refer them to one of the schools. Usually, the school she had recommended - was the school they registered the children to (Casual conversation no. 1).*

The channelling practices outlined here delineate the double facetted role the ethnic network assumed in relation to this group of choosers: on one hand,

these networks mediated between public and private domains, and interfaced between the newcomers' old and new lives, thereby creating a transit platform that facilitated their relocation process, but at the same time, and indeed by fulfilling informational cavities, by assuming other intermediary roles, and through their generous actions and the subconscious membering messages they transmitted, these veteran immigrants played a gate-keeping function that defined, reconstructed and restricted the international choosers' educational landscapes:

> *Renni: There was a Doctor here, that Adi had known from work, and his wife – she simply knew everything about everything, so she told me about Alton and gave me their phone number. She was a real information champion! Later I called Nira (an estate agent) and she said: if you are coming for a short period – Alton is the school for you, and she offered to do the registration for us. I knew very little then – mainly that all those who didn't want religious education went to Alton. I wasn't aware there was a choice system, and that you can choose and all that, I asked where to register, they told me: Alton, and that's it (Interview no. 7).*

Like many other families, this family was offered information about one or two schools from two sources, and thus, their landscape included only these referenced schools, while other schools in the area were simply located outside of their cognitive horizons, and therefore nonexistent (Ball, Maguire and Macrae 1998). Further, this quote, like many others, highlights the collaborative speech code, which was blended with the school choice discourses: sharing information, interpreting, explaining and simplifying the schooling market were part of the assistance Israelis offered to each other, as part and parcel of their friendship ethos.

Ball and Vincent (1998) argue that social networks 'influence the way in which people make sense of, take up positions towards, and respond to their surroundings' and thus they 'are crucial in developing an understanding of the practices and meaning of choice' (p. 378-379). Yet, by assuming these intermediary duties, and by constructing their co-nationals' landscapes of choice, the ethnic network offered an ethnic interpretation or ethnic perception of the educational landscape:

Ben: When we came to London, I didn't want to live in Hill View Gardens.

I wanted to live near my work place, but Dhalia insisted that we rent a house in the Hill, because 'what would happen to the kids social life if we lived so far away from the Israeli 'swamp' (laughing). If we were to live there (far away) we would have saved a lot of money on the rent and maybe other things, and we would be able to buy 'jewelry, gold and silver' - but not friends. Dhalia didn't want to consider any other area. She really wanted to live near Rina (a central figure in the community RH) (laughing). So, when we came to choose a school, I really didn't choose a school, but a house, and we went looking for a house in the Hill near the other Israelis. We went to an Israeli estate agent who found this house for us. We asked the agent about schools here, and they pointed out a few schools. At the end our choice was based merely on what Rina and others have told us about the school. We chose Alton because it was near by, and because Rina sent her kids there, along with many other Israelis (Interview no. 2).

The ethnic horizons marked here are yet another form of the membering discourse, as it endowed its members with a sense of belonging to the ethnic group, and a sense of place. In this case the ethnic network provided its members with a 'cognitive map' of the ethnic locality which delineates its geographic, demographic and social boundaries, and marks clearly the routes leading to the ethnic educational niche. This ethnically defined cognitive map, and the sense of direction rendered here were particularly significant for these choosers, as their lack of local knowledge often left them disorientated, and misplaced:

Ruth: There was a stage when I had considered Sydney Gardens as an option, simply because all the others I was interested in were full, and Sydney was the nearest to our house. But then Ada convinced me otherwise, she said: there are no Israelis there, and it is quite far from the Hill so your children will have no social life, they will be very lonely there. At least during the first year it's worthwhile to give them a smooth start in a familiar environment (Casual conversation no. 213).

The role that these ties assumed here was revealed not only in the ways in which the newly arrived were directed to well-known and pre-confirmed pathways, but also as choosers were rerouted away from undesired schools. Ball and Vincent (1998) argue that what is circulated among members of a given network are directives and sign-posts that enable choosers to discriminate the 'right routes' from the rest and define the desired school versus those set to be dismissed. However, a sense of one's place simultaneously

includes a sense of the place of others. The definitions of one's own place contained, in this case, an ethnic element as well as fear of racism:

> *Miri: Somewhere in the back of my mind was the fear of anti-Semitism. When you choose a school like Alton or one of the Jewish schools, you can be sure that your children are safe, I mean from this perspective (Interview no. 8).*

> *Edna: These Christian private schools are not really an option for us; our kids will always feel out of place there, uncomfortable, I mean, their homes, language, culture – everything would be so different from the others at these schools. I wouldn't put my kids in that awkward position (Casual conversation no. 53).*

These narratives highlight the parent's thinking, suggesting that they were not blindly channelled into communal schools, nor did they unconsciously follow their informants' advice. I shall refer to their considerations more thoroughly in the following section, however, I would like to make a few concluding notes as to the channelling feature portrayed here.

The depiction of the channelling function sketched here demonstrates 'the strength of weak ties' (Granovetter 1973), as these networks were unorganised, casual and unstable. Despite that, they assumed a cardinal gate-keeping role by generating a mental picture of the ethnic locality with its schools, and by erecting symbolic walls that confined the 'landscapes of choice', to few, particular communal schools. Indeed, as the findings demonstrate, the choice of school was thoroughly embedded in social and community networks, and in an image of collectivity generated by these associations (Ball 1997). In Portes and Landolt's (1996) terminology, the ethnic landscapes created here and its channelling system can be interpreted as the ethnic community's way of exerting conformity pressure, urging members to conform with its cultural practices and maintain its existing communal structures.

It is important also to review the conditions under which the channelling system operated: the families in question were particularly vulnerable, they were outsiders, disconnected, and as demonstrated throughout this chapter, they lacked the most basic resources that could enable them to survive in any

market system. The only resource available to them that could replenish the voids created by their relocation process, were their ethnic ties, limited and frail as they might be. Perhaps under these circumstances, it may not be surprising that most of the parents in this category, consciously, happily and thankfully followed the communal path pointed to them into communal schools.

Surprisingly perhaps, the choosers' middle-class cultural capital and their liquid assets did not compensate for their disconnected market position, but rather, their social and ethnic capital: 'working on the surface structure of choice' (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1996: 106), undoubtedly placed obstacles on their school choice process, but, with the help of a transit platform provided by their compatriots, they seem to reach their favourite destinations relatively unharmed.

Crunch time: decisions

In comparing the three groups of choosers, it became evident that each group conducted its choice process within differently bounded 'opportunity structures' (Roberts 1993) which outlined and often restricted their 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997). The international choosers' horizons for action, that is, the space in which considerations and decisions were thought of, determined and applied, was particularly limited. Set between the tightening boundaries of an auxiliary 'musical chairs' market, and the compelling force of the ethnic network's channelling action, this restricted setting often rendered the families' considerations for choice, educational preferences or child matching practices, irrelevant and impractical. The choice process often ended with registration to the one school that was approached or to the one 'default option' school that offered the child a place. Evidently, in face of these harsh market realities, initial preferences, considerations, as well as strongly held cultural and educational principles, often had to be abandoned and disregarded.

These secular parents initially rejected Jewish schools, yet they registered their children in a Jewish school:

> *Talma: That's where they referred us (her husband's expatriate colleagues RH) and that is where we went. No one told us that there were other options (Interview no. 31).*

This mother principally rejected both religious schools and single sex schools:

> *Karen: This school was way too religious for us, and also they separate the boys' and girls' classes, which I thought was simply an unnatural environment for him. But there we were (Interview no. 34).*

This family knew they were coming for a relatively long period (5-6 years), and searched for 'high quality education', and thus opted for independent schools, applying months in advance. However, the schools they contacted could not offer them a place, and in consultation with their colleagues in London they rented a house in close proximity to a highly desired local primary, which was also a communal favourite:

> *Anat: It wasn't what we initially planned, and we had to rent months ahead, but it was worth it because it's really a great school so I do not regret this decision (Interview no. 12).*

These narratives, that demonstrate considerable compromises, highlight the interviewees' positioning as outsiders, disconnected and unsuspecting choosers, and suggest that under these market realities, their preferences and considerations were simply inapplicable. Although not all parents found themselves in compromising situations such as those quoted (n=9 families), what was typical of this group of choosers was the reactive response both to the particular market configuration they faced during their pre-arrival period, and to the specific circumstances and events that took place on the week or day of their registration (that is, places being taken or becoming available). In this sense they differed radically from the other groups of choosers who were able to engage with schools in a more insistent and proactive ways.

One of the puzzling issues relating to this group's decision-making process was the question who made the decision. While among the more experienced groups of choosers it was clearly mothers who shouldered both the choice process and much of the decision-making, and at the secondary level children were indeed involved, here the pattern was different. Firstly, in most cases, the

children were not involved in the process, although in some families they did state general preferences – for example, rejecting religious or single-sex schools or preferring communal schools. Additionally, most children did not visit the schools prior to their registration, and given the tight boundaries of the 'musical chairs' market they were confined to and the parents' modest level of knowledge of the schools, many parents felt it was not beneficial to involve their children in the process. Secondly, in the majority of the families in this category, the mothers were leading the networking processes, yet, the final decision was left to the parent who had done the registration, often the one who flew to London on a pre-arrival visit or arrived before other family members to make final arrangements. This was in the majority of families, the father.

Comparing this group to the more experienced respondents highlighted another theme related to their priorities and decisions. The data suggests that it was much more common to find family roles, household organisational routines and familial resources being accommodated to school among veteran choosers, while among the newly arrived described here, schools have had to fit into a set of plans, constraints and expectations related to the relocation process, the aims it was due to achieve, and the resulting household arrangement. Since in nearly half of the newly arrived families both partners expected to engage in work or study immediately upon arrival, their choice of schools, and the choice of housing, often reflected their anticipated household arrangements. For example, those requiring the help of an au-pair or baby-sitter to accompany their children to and from the school, searched for a school within a walking distance from their house or opted for a school that provided a transportation service. Choice was embedded for this group of choosers in a complex pattern of family demands, and thus, the competing pressures of work, study and family life, rendered some schools unapproachable or impracticable while others seemed viable and convenient. However, not all families in this category were in this situation; in fact, in more than half of the families one of the parents, mostly the mothers, were homemakers at least during the first few years after their relocation, and were thus able and indeed willing, to drive their children to significant distances. Consequently, the educational landscape these families

envisaged was less constrained (Reay and Ball 1997).

Another feature of this group of choosers was the short-term orientation described earlier. Crozier (1997) argues that in order to act as educational consumers parents must be able to identify their children's educational needs, as well as decode the nature of schools and appreciate the value of education on offer. Being unable to define their children's educational, social or emotional needs at the point of relocation, nor to engage in matching the child to a school, these parents often emphasised short-term considerations that centered on their children's initial adjustment to life in London, highlighting their attempt to find ways to ease their adaptation difficulties, to ensure their children's comfort, general well being and happiness:

> *Adam: Why this school? well, yes, mainly because I wanted to give the girls an easy start, where they would feel less of strangers here, they would have friendships with other Israelis to ease their start, and lessen the absorption difficulties (Interview no. 1).*
>
> *Orna: My kids often helped newcomers by translating stuff, by showing them the way around the school, explaining about the routines and how to do this and that, and often the teachers themselves asked my kids to 'adopt' others for a while, until they settled in. I remember how we were helped in the same way so I can appreciate how important this help is (Interview no. 11).*

Their children's happiness was of great importance (Coldron and Boulton 1991) but the concept of happiness displayed here was also short term - a matter of adjustment to the new school, to the language, culture, and also about of making new friendships, rather than achieving long term educational goals or realising specific talents. This may explain why academic achievements were rarely used to discriminate between schools, and why awareness of poor academic standards hardly ever led to rejection. As illustrated in these quotes, the short-term vision displayed here, was tightly linked with their decisions to follow the communal pattern of schooling. Indeed, most of the interviewees in this group actively searched for schools with significant number of Israeli children, and this was the most significant consideration for choice among this group of choosers:

Ada: I chose Parkway because I wanted to them to have an understanding of their Jewish and Israeli roots. I wanted a school that was experienced with children who do not speak English, and I was concerned with their happiness. And yes, obviously the social issue was the most important consideration for us (Casual conversation no. 2).

As seen here, the emphasis was on the children's social circle, as a way of ensuring an 'easy start' socially, emotionally, linguistically and indeed educationally, and as a defense against a socially hostile environment. As Bourdieu (1986a) argues, parents seek to place their children with others who are like them. The ability to identify an institution with its clientele, to label and classify organisational territories as either 'us' or 'them', is an important skill in the choice process, and is an essential part of the process of social distancing and closure (Ball 2003a). However, this group of parents, was unable to decipher and decode neither the schools' culture nor its clientele indicators, and were facing a schooling arena where most schools (apart from the communal favourites) were marked by their otherness, and feel alien and unknown. Under these conditions, the presence of other Israeli families rendered the school setting more familiar, confirming the 'right for us' membering message:

Gila: I came to register the kids. I remember as I entered the school I could hear the children's voices in Hebrew from a distance, and I immediately felt more relaxed (Casual conversation no. 9).

Further, these considerations indicate that identities mattered: as illustrated by these quotes, the international choosers' considerations for choice displayed the parents' and their children's Israeli national identity, as well as their strong secular identity, and these clearly affected their educational preferences:

Danna: Why? because there were other Israelis here. Today I can think of many reasons why I would have chosen this school - Its really a wonderful school, but, at that time, when I registered the kids, I wasn't aware of any of it. All I knew is that there are other Israelis here (Casual conversation no. 33).

Rachel: I did consider Parkway – but I rejected it quite quickly because we are so anti-religious that even the little religiosity that is there has put me off (Casual conversation no. 298).

It should be noted here that these choosers have not yet developed ethnic

identities and nor have their children, and given that their choice process took place prior to their relocation to London, most were unaware of the possible effects of their children's schooling on their identities, an awareness that comes to light in the narratives of more experienced veteran choosers. Consequently, most parents in this group did not perceive their national identities and their religious orientations as predominant considerations, but as features that were embedded in and inter-related with their other concerns, uncertainties and priorities, especially those relating to the children's initial adaptation process. Nonetheless, their networking practices and the channelling system described previously featured their identities loudly and clearly, as their footsteps tightly matched those of their veteran co-nationals, following a path which was defined and confirmed by others, who share their identities, their culture and their concerns as immigrants in London.

It seems that this group's 'crunch time' resulted in educational clustering. However, the reasons and considerations given here expose circumstantial and provisional reasoning. The question that comes to mind is therefore: will these educational enclaves become permanent habitats for these families, or temporary stations in their immigration journey?

And finally...

This chapter follows the stories of immigrant families as they open the doorway to their new lives in London, and as they engage with the educational marketplace in Hill View Gardens, for the first time in their lives. My focus in this chapter has been on the interaction between these families and the educational marketplace, as it was perceived from their positions as outsiders looking in.

The storyline began with their initial search for information about the schools and the relevant procedures, and ended with their decision-making. It followed these families as they, with the assistance of their ethnic network, constructed a cognitive image of the unfamiliar locality and the schools, thereby defining a

space of comfort and safety, a space where they were accepted as members. The story went on to explore the ways in which this collectively fabricated ethnic image framed and restricted the families' choice process and their decisions, leading to the reinvention of an ethnic pattern of schooling and the reproduction of an educational ethnic niche market.

Throughout the chapter, the devices that yield ethnic clustering in education were exposed, suggesting that the choosers' state of vulnerability and need can engender ethnic inter-dependence, leading to ethnic closure. The stories of the families included in this group, underscore the vulnerable market position of those who lack in market-fitness, stressing the significance of social resources in establishing access to the choice process, and demonstrating that due to the lack of cultural resources, these immigrant consumers were poorly equipped to deal with the educational market, albeit their middle-class capitals.

At the centre of the research findings presented in this chapter, stood the ethnic community in London, visualised here through its relative position in relation to the international choosers, and the multitude of roles and functions its members fulfilled as they aided the newly arrived in their time of need. However, as illustrated, by functioning as social resources to others, and by positioning themselves on the giving side of the relationship equation, members of the ethnic community generated and reproduced ethnic clustering in education, by supporting and promoting a steady flow of newly arriving families to specific communal schools.

Earlier I proposed that in immigration areas, schools function as the main re-socialisation agent for immigrant families, and therefore can become primary channels for integration. However, depending on the school's population schools can also serve as a primary route for ethnic ghettoisation. Thus, the choice of school among these immigrant families may reflect not only their ability to master the choice process, but also, their inclination towards integration in the host society, that is, their propensity to adapt to their new homeland by altering their culture and identities.

The story of the international unskilled choosers ends here, at a point where their tendency to adapt and integrate has not been established yet, but where the embrace of the ethnic community was dramatically felt. This is also the starting point for the next chapter, which may be more aptly titled as 'the post arrival stage'. As the new story line begins where the current one ends – at the heart of the ethnic community, the question that comes to light is: will the ethnic ghetto and its educational niche become a stable home or a temporary shelter for these families? I shall attempt to address this question next.

9. A Balancing Act: The Quasi- practiced Newcomers

This chapter centres on the experiences of **quasi-practiced newcomers** as they engage with schools in London. This group includes newcomer families (n=12) who have lived in London less than 3 years and described their most recent choice of school. Most of these accounts related to secondary school transfers, and few reported on a voluntary transfer to a more desired primary or secondary school. This group includes some (n=4) newly arrived immigrants whose children were 11 years old at the point of relocation, who were engaging with the market once again just a few months after their arrival. In addition, this group incorporates the reports made by veteran families reporting on their earlier choice processes, as well as accounts made by those whose children were born in Britain as they detailed their first choice of (primary) school.

This category of choosers approximates to those parents described by Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1996) as 'semi-skilled choosers': they have 'strong inclination but limited capacity to engage with the market. Their cultural capital is in the wrong currency and they are less able to accumulate the right sort' (p.102). Their foreign biographies and histories have not provided them with the experience and knowledge of the school system, and their cultural skills and symbolic aptitudes often hinder their capacities to engage with the market effectively: 'their economic, social and cultural capitals are in imbalance' (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1996: 102).

There were three key points that characterised this group's choice process: the central theme that emerged from their narratives relates to '**decoding**'; these newcomers were engaging with schools at a time where their cross-cultural adaptation process and their learning curve were at their peak, and thus, much of their interaction with the choice process revolved around their attempts to decipher and comprehend their new homeland, its culture and its education

system, and construct an image of their new lives and their circumstances as a minority ethnic group. Evidently, issues of language deficiency and cultural differences featured sharply in these accounts.

As these migrants constructed their own positions and viewpoints, they attempted to 'figure out' the choice process, to 'work out' and 'decipher' the system and its procedures, to 'decode' and make sense of the 'language of secondary meanings' (Ball 2003a) of schools and the consumerist discourse of the market, and to 'read between the lines' and 'discriminate' the information they retrieved, they brought to the pitch their unique 'stranger's standpoint' (Simmel 1971), which exposed the 'compound of details', and indeed oddities, that make up the choice system in Hill View Gardens.

The second feature of this group's choice process was its **embeddedness** in the choosers' social context. The findings suggest that this category of choosers lacked in market resources, which meant that their position in the education market was marginal and disadvantaged. However, similar to the international choosers, those who were rooted in the ethnic community were able to compensate for their vulnerable positioning by utilising their social capital. Additionally, the practices of school choice portrayed in this chapter, among embedded choosers, reveal that this process has become a control mechanism through which the ethnic community reproduced its structural features and maintained its cohesion.

The third point focuses on the **reinvention of the group's ethnicity**. The school choice narratives recounted by these families draw attention to their engagement with an 'ethnic project' that seems to be interrelated with and dependent on their choice process: the construction of their own ethnicity. As I shall demonstrate, the school choice process and the emergence of their ethnic affiliation appear as two journeys on the same track.

In addition to the key points addressed here, there is also a notable sub-division within this group. This category of quasi-practiced newcomer choosers includes

'embedded choosers' (n=23) who conduct their lives within the boundaries of the ethnic community, and 'detached choosers' (n=8) who by choice or chance lead their lives away from the communal centres. These sub-groups seem to experience the choice process differently, and the comparative dimension their accounts offer accentuates the functions and the meanings attached to the presence and deeds of the ethnic community.

The narratives articulated here are unique, as they are voiced from a position of exceptional sensitivity and excessive self and social awareness due to the cross-cultural adaptation process (Kim 1995; Grinberg and Grinberg 1989), and therefore this chapter has an exceptional affective and reflective tone that often dominates the presentation of the research findings.

In what follows, I shall fragment this group's choice process in order to examine how the choosers' skills and resources, or the lack of these, affect the ways in which they conduct themselves in, and negotiated with their local education marketplace. Much of the chapter will centre on the skills and actions of embedded choosers, while at times I shall take a 'comparative pause' to delineate the experiences of detached choosers. Following the market-action of this group of choosers, the starting point for this chapter will be their information collecting strategies, and the chapter will end with an analysis of their decision-making. But firstly I shall sketch the features of the choice process and the education market that these families have faced.

Mind the gap

Most of the interviewees in this category began their choice process approximately 4-8 months prior to the schools' registration deadline. The first stage in the choice process was the search for information about schools and registration procedures. This primary search for information, and the listing of the schools on which information would be collected, may be seen as one of the most significant decisions parents can make, since it marks and contours and often restricts the preliminary borders of the choosers' landscapes of choice

(Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball 1994). The findings suggest that from this stage on, their landscape would contract in size as schools would be either eliminated from the list or contacted and applied to. However, the interviewees' reports also demonstrated that this initial base-line cognitive demarcation from which the choice process began, involved unconscious reasoning that reflected both the choosers' spatial horizons and their intuitive perception of 'the accessible' or 'the feasible' schools. Due to the respondents' relative newness in the area and their foreign cultural perspective, most families confined themselves to what they considered as 'local' or 'communal schools' and collected information about 1-3 primary schools or 2-4 secondary schools. In comparison to the more experienced veteran choosers, this opening outlook was tighter both geographically and with regard to the number of options included.

The next stage in the process was decision-making as to which schools the family would apply to. Most families whose children were transferring to secondary schools defined at that point one 'desired school' and a few 'fall back' options, while those searching for primary schools often defined few (mostly two) equally desired schools or one desired and one fall back option. This phase was followed by the buzz and fuss of the application stage, where parents were filling forms, writing letters, collecting and organising the necessary documentation and sending their forms to the schools packed with their anticipation and anxieties. Some families (n=7) withdrew from their early plans and applied to one school only, but this was more common among primary school choosers. The following stage, a stressful one, included at the secondary level only, entry exams, interviews and other selection procedures, but only few children engaged with the competitive schooling market in this way.

The process ended for nearly all of the families in this category, with one or two schools offering the child a place. Few families (2 primary and 3 secondary school choosers) received rejection letters from all schools they applied to and come July they applied to schools that were not originally on their lists, knowing in advance that these schools could offer their children a place. For those who were offered a place at their favourite school the process has ended with a sigh

of relief. But some children in this category were initially offered a place at one of their 'fallback' options, and were consequently listed on their desired schools' waiting lists. Of those, several had followed anxiously their progression along the shrinking waiting lists, with some metaphorically holding their breathe until the beginning of the year (and some even longer), in anticipation of places becoming available at their preferred schools. Two families in this category appealed to their preferred schools, but both appeals have failed. Others have taken the places offered to them in their 'fallback' option schools and withdrew from their favourite schools' waiting lists.

Unlike the international choosers described earlier, that is, the families' first school choice experience, whose landscapes were tightened by the structural features of the 'musical-chairs' market, the quasi-experienced choosers were no longer situated within a residual marketplace, but in the prime-market, at a time when mass movements occur throughout the system as children compete for places at primary, secondary schools or sixth-form entry years. Nonetheless, due to their poor market-fitness, and their children's lack of market aptitude, they often felt unable to fully participate in the fierce market-action. Consequently, many parents found that they were yet again confined to an inferior market, a **'reserve'** or **'retreat' market** of non-selective, under-subscribed schools that did not offer access to the prestigious selective schools. While the 'musical-chairs' market was a structural feature of the educational marketplace, and a residual of the main market movements, the 'retreat' market was a corollary of the parents' and children's market-fitness and their tactical choosing. Working on the fringes of the market meant, in many cases, that they had only few options to choose from, and little control over the situation, as one respondent noted:

> *Arnon: We didn't really choose, we merely applied to the ones we thought we had a chance of getting him in, and then, well, the schools chose, and you know how it is, they pick out the best and you can consider yourself lucky if you get one positive reply (Casual conversation no. 460).*

The notion that 'schools choose' was a common view, often voiced as a complaint or a critique among the interviewees in this category. What might be

taken for granted by native-born British parents, that is, that parental choice merely handles parents 'the right to state a preference', may be interpreted as a naïve perception of the marketplace by newcomers who may be taking the terms 'school choice', 'choice policy' or 'parental choice' too literally. Coming from a catchment-area system that guarantees the child a place in a local school, and being lured into an unfamiliar 'choice system', these parents felt deceived and disillusioned by the gap they revealed between what the 'system of pseudo-choice', as one interviewee termed it, promised, and what it could deliver, especially at a time it rendered them powerless, ineffective and disadvantaged.

Although their considerations for choice and educational preferences were all at work here, many times they were rendered irrelevant, as parents applied what Ball (1997) refers to as 'tactical choosing', that is, they applied to few not-highly-desired but not-entirely-undesired schools, that seldom matched their initial preferences, in order to secure a place in one school, that is, in any school. As noted, their process often ended with only one school offering the child a place. It should be stressed here that most of the 'communal schools' were oversubscribed, and thus much of the choice process and tactical choosing among the embedded choosers was conducted in an attempt to gain access to these popular schools, and in an effort to secure a place at a reasonable alternative if access to the desired schools was denied.

In what follows I shall describe different aspects of their choice process in an attempt to examine how these families found their way, yet again, into a secondary educational market segment.

Where does the information highway lead?

In analysing the information gathering practices among this group, three inter-related topics emerged from the data. The first, addresses the types and amounts of **information** available to this group of choosers and examines the ways in which it was utilised. The second theme, offers a **linguistic**

perspective on the information gathering practices among these choosers, by illustrating the ways in which language ineptness in English and the use of mother tongue affected their information gathering strategies. The last theme focuses on **grapevine knowledge**; it mainly portrays the parents' networks and exposes the impact of the parents' networking practices on their choice process.

Much of the formal knowledge available at Westway Borough was written: there were school prospectuses, LEA handbooks, national test score league tables and invites to open evenings published by the schools, the LEAs and local or national newspapers, as well as lists of schools, OFSTED reports published by the schools, letters and forms sent directly to parents either by the current schools or the LEAs. Some of the formal information was communicated verbally, at open evenings and other parents meetings, held either at the current schools or at the prospective schools. Of all the formal information available to parents in this locality only the LEAs handbooks were available in other languages (although not in Hebrew), and distributed to all parents through the current schools. To receive other formal information parents were required to call upon the different schools, the Westway LEA and adjacent LEAs, visit schools and follow publications in newspapers. They must be 'alert' consumers (Willms and Echols 1992) to obtain this information.

The findings indicate that the majority of the parents in this category were 'alert' and proactive choosers when it came to obtaining information, and most had a variety of types of formal information at their disposal at the time of choice. Nearly all of the parents obtained their LEA's handbook and 2-5 prospectuses of schools along with other registration paperwork. In addition, some obtained lists of independent schools, list of Jewish schools, and examination result league tables. Few entered the schools' websites or the DfES website, and few obtained examination packs from local bookshops. All families attended 2-4 open evenings, and those facing secondary school transitions attended several parents' evenings at their current schools. Some parents had conversations with head teachers or teachers at their children's current schools.

In their analysis of the sources of information available to choosers Ball and Vincent (1998) differentiate between two types of information: formal ('cold') type of knowledge which is obtained from LEAs, schools, DfES, the media and the Internet, and informal ('hot') knowledge, which is mainly accessible through the choosers' networks of friends and acquaintances. Unlike the international choosers who had little knowledge of the sources and types of formal information that was routinely made available for choosers, and thus had little choice but to rely on their networks for information, this group was in a much more advantageous position: most had the knowledge of and access to various sources of formal information, and had managed to accumulate fair amounts of data. Nevertheless, similar to Ball and Vincent's (1998) findings, the analysis of this groups' information gathering strategies demonstrates that these parents chose to rely on the 'hot', more personalised form of knowledge, which they obtained mainly through their London based networks:

> *Ron: We looked at 3 schools for her, we visited all of them, talked with teachers, and read their brochures, but the main information about these schools came from our Israeli friends. We talked with the parents, and Nicki talked with their kids, and that's how we got 'inside stories' on each of the schools, from a reliable source (Casual conversation no. 461).*

The informational brief offered here suggests that this group had a strong inclination to participate in the market-action, and in the first round had managed to obtain fair amounts and various types of formal information, however, the correlation between access to knowledge and its utilisation was not always high nor positive mainly due to the participants' poor communicative capacities. I shall detail these linguistic hurdles next.

The missing link

As these newcomer choosers entered the education marketplace, they came face to face with the greased public-relations market-apparatus that poured massive amounts of data on their laps, yet, they found it difficult to handle or decode it both due to their language skills and lack of local knowledge. This highlights their baffling positioning as quasi-practiced choosers: they were able to access and retrieve the required information but unable to utilise it effectively.

The most distinct theme emerging from the data, relating issues of language to the process of choice among this group of choosers was the deficiency model (Gumperz 1982). The interviewees' accounts suggest that although most parents had reasonable amounts of formal information at their disposal at the time of choice many discarded this type of information as 'futile':

> *Ruth: I tried to read these handbooks that I received from the local authority, but I couldn't make sense out of them. My English skills were very poor at the time (Casual conversation no. 7).*

> *Miriam: These brochures had all these terms and abbreviations: CTC, VA, independent, sixth-form, comprehensive. I didn't understand any of them. To be honest with you, even today I don't understand some of these terms (Casual conversation no. 129).*

> *Ada: (3 months in London, at a parents meeting, talking to another Israeli parent): We need subtitles (translation RH) here (Casual conversation no. 373).*

These parents felt that they were unable to make use of formal types of information whether written or spoken due to their poor language skills. The difficulties emanated not only from their inadequate English vocabulary or grammatical ineptness but also from their lack of knowledge of the specific terminology, jargon, slang, expressions, idioms or abbreviations that are habitually used in the educational domain. Additionally, in decoding spoken communication, the tone, volume, pitch and accent of speakers often brought about yet more distractions on their translation and deciphering process, particularly during school tours, parents' evenings and interviews:

> *Liora: I can't understand a word he's saying, his accent.. (Casual conversation no. 43).*

> *Osnat: We could not hear what she was saying – her voice was so faint and she spoke so fast. At first we asked her to repeat, and she did, twice. We still did not get it, but we were too embarrassed to ask a third time (Casual conversation no. 46).*

Some interviewees complained that there was too much information for them to handle, 'they bombard you with information', as one parent moaned. Ball (2003a) notes that this is a common complaint among middle-class choosers who often feel that there is too much information to process and assess.

Further, being familiar with the commercialised market communications, they suspect that the information is potentially unreliable and could not be trusted. Thus, he argues, this type of information overload may provoke anxiety and uncertainty rather than a sense of security and control. However, among this group the sense of 'information overload' occurred as a consequence of their need to translate and inability to comprehend the information, their lack of local knowledge, which meant that they needed to deal both with trivial details as well as more complex information, and due to their inability to scan the information, discriminate and extract the essential material from the 'excess'. Being unable to wheedle out the essence of the communication, they often sought the help of other parents in 'mining' the 'bottom-line':

> *Ori: First they tell you it's a comprehensive school and then, they tell you they do this battery of exams. So what is the deal here?*
> *Gideon: The bottom line is that they do these exams, and then they take in only those who do best (Casual conversation no. 415).*

It should be noted that most of the parents quoted here have acquired (prior to arrival) the 'knowledge of' the English linguistic forms, and considered themselves relatively adept English communicators, and thus, they experienced their linguistic difficulties as a surprising and disturbing obstacle, as this interviewee, a psychologist, observed:

> *Carmela: We all come here thinking that our English is OK and that language is the one thing that is not going to be a problem, and then the first encounter with any English speaker simply gives a blow to our self-confidence and we end up feeling as competent and as skilled as a 5 year old (Interview no. 49).*

The engagement with the education market placed these parents in a position where their linguistic disabilities were accentuated and deeply felt:

> *Nurit: It took me 3 hours to read that brochure, I had to read it with a dictionary, but the problem was all these names, and terms, and abbreviations, they are not even in the dictionary.*
> *Galia: I spend hours filling that form, and the most difficult part was where you have to say why you chose that school. First I wrote it in Hebrew, then translated it to English, then I gave it to my colleague to check, and then I was thinking that my handwriting doesn't look very mature so I typed it in on the computer and glued it to the form (Casual conversation no. 131).*

Their capacity to participate in the education market was clearly dependent on their language skills, not only for information gathering or in order to fill forms, but also to interact and negotiate with the system:

> *Ruth: When we talked with the Head at Parkway I felt so dumb, I had so much to ask, but I just couldn't (Casual conversation no. 7).*

Some parents felt degraded and devalued due to their limited language skills; their inability to express themselves, voice their needs, convey their concerns, question or challenge organisations and people they come in contact with, often generated feelings of exclusion, loneliness and of being misunderstood:

> *Nira: I used to sit there saying basically nothing. I had a lot to say, but I just couldn't bring myself to say it. But the problem is, you get used to being the quiet outsider (Casual conversation no. 132).*
>
> *Noga: I wanted to stand up (in a school's OFSTED meeting RH) and ask about their plans to improve the homework issue, but I thought, for the sake of my daughter I better not embarrass her. So I said nothing, but I got really frustrated when no one else brought it up. I though, what? am I the only parent who thinks they need to have more regular homework? (Casual conversation no. 270).*

Those quoted felt that their poor linguistic abilities hindered their spontaneity, and their authenticity, and thus silenced and censored themselves to the point of self- exclusion. Others were concerned that linguistic miscommunications and slip-ups may result in embarrassment for both the speaker and his children and a loss of parental respect and the parental aura of omni-potency. The respondent cited below feared that miscommunications might lead to misunderstandings and even conflicts:

> *Adam: When you communicate with them, you constantly ask yourself – what did I do wrong? Have I offended them?? (Casual conversation no. 34).*

Ball (2003a) argues 'the middle-class gets things done through talk of a particular sort. They represent and perform themselves as moral subjects, as efficacious social actors and as class agents, through talk' (p. 3). Indeed, these middle-class parents seem to fit this depiction, which might explain their exasperation in view of their inability 'to get things done' through talk:

Edna: I still feel sort of crippled in English. I will never be able to communicate in English as well as they do, and I will always be in a disadvantage, in any situation where there is a competition or a conflict – there is no way I can succeed (Casual conversation no. 81).

Some parents in this category considered themselves crippled and incompetent because of their language ineptitude, and consequently felt they were unable to fully participate in any type of competitive situation. However, given that their language skills were objectively reasonable, some of these linguistic issues may be attributed to the newcomers self consciousness and lack of confidence about their communicative skills:

Nillie: I was an English teacher, can you believe that I lost my tongue at the meeting (Casual conversation no. 7).

Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1994) argue that the parents' inclination to engage with the education market is underpinned by a certain degree of self-confidence: 'confidence is one aspect of the package of cultural resources which enables the privileged to operate the market to their advantage' (p. 9). As seen here, these parents have lost their confidence on account of their poor communicative skills.

As they engage with the schooling market, they find that their own communicative resources were not the only hurdle which may hinder their capacity to negotiate with the system, but also their children's language skills posed practical obstacles that limited the available or accessible options:

Ada: I can't apply to that school - Ron can't sit the test (Casual conversation no. 403).

Dalia: I won't let him sit these tests unless I think he is ready for them. I mean, his self esteem is at stake here. How would he feel when he walks out, having completed only half the test (Casual conversation no. 385).

Some newcomers in this situation felt less inclined to engage with the more prestigious selective schooling market segment, and applied to schools which they perceived as their fallback schools, their 'retreat market':

Ada: (3 months in London) Broadwalk seems to be our only option at this stage. There are no tests, just the interview (Casual conversation no. 104).

> *Liora: I didn't want a Jewish school, the independent schools, they wouldn't accept them because of their English, so I had no other choice. I went to see Boxhill which was the nearest to our house (Casual conversation no. 412).*

These newcomers were frustrated consumers in the market system (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1995) and felt unable to 'work' the system to their advantage, due to their own communicative capacities as well as their children's linguistic aptitude.

Many of them expressed feelings of frustration, aggravation, stress, devaluation and alienation, resulting from their inability to interact with the education system and activate the market to their advantage:

> *Edna (3 months in London): They're going to Parkway, for the past 2 months, crying their hearts out every morning, I don't know what to do. Shall I take them to another school or am I giving up too soon? There's no guarantee they'll be better off somewhere else (Casual conversation no. 96).*

The strangeness of their children's educational experience in British schools, resulted in feelings of helplessness and inadequacy, as parents as well as consumers:

> *Lily: Oh it was so depressing! She cried for months and they wouldn't let me sit with her. I used to leave the school with tears choking my throat. Seeing her so helpless and not being able to help, I wanted to take her out of there – but where?? (Casual conversation no. 96).*

> *Edna: I had such a saga with Parkway. Eitan took care of everything and paid them and then on the first day of school I got there with Shiri (the baby) in my arms, and they said: madam, why didn't you write to say you wanted the place, you sent money but you need to write too. I said, sorry, it didn't occur to me that you had doubts after we paid, so she says: sorry, we gave the place to someone else because we were not sure you were coming. I just stood there, with the baby in my arms and cried! He stood next to me, frightened and wrapped up in those horrible uniform, and cried with me (Casual conversation no. 222).*

Much of their frustrations and anger may emanate from the element of surprise in these situations: these middle-class parents bring to the pitch their (typically middle-class) self-confidence, their self-perception as proactive parents and

their expectations that they would be able to successfully negotiate their requests with the schools (Crozier 1997). They did not expect to find themselves in these powerless positions nor in these compromising situations, which seemed to magnify their sense of inadequacy as parents and as consumers.

However, their communicative difficulties and the resulting inability to 'work' the system, were only one part of the problem...

Untying the subtext

In analysing the experiences of the newcomer choosers, as they collected and attempted to make sense of the information that they had obtained, what came to light were not only their linguistic difficulties but also their inability to decode the educational discourses they came across (Fairclough 1989):

> *Nira: At some point they quoted somebody – an educational figure I presume, and then everybody laughed, and I looked at Drora and she looked at me, and none of us got it. I have been here, what, 2.5 years? I still don't get their sense of humour (Casual conversation no. 274).*

> *Orna: The brochure says it's an ex-grammar school. Grammar means selective, doesn't it? So what does it mean? Is it now a non-selective school or is it still a selective school? (Casual conversation no. 372).*

LeVine (1984) argues that every language has distinct cultural elements that underlie the communication, for example, humour, collective knowledge of history, a tacit understanding of certain titles, knowledge of names of people, events and places, common understanding of terms and slang words, etc. These are often taken for granted by people who share the same culture but as these quotes demonstrate, they appear incomprehensible to outsiders. Haslett (1989) maintains that one of the most important attributes of communicative competence in a second language is the ability to decipher the nuances of the communication – the discourse, which underlies the linguistic layer. Evidently, these newcomer choosers were unable to decode these cultural nuances:

> *Ron: It was in one of those governor's meetings, the chairman congratulated the head for doing excellent work in preparing the school for*

inspection, and suddenly they all said together, like they do in the parliament, 'yeh, yeh!' (Casual conversation no. 66).

Lital: The women next to me were Jewish and when the head finished his address one of them whispered to the other: 'welcoming all cultures, eh?' And I thought to myself, why would she say that? But afterwards, I thought, we probably would not be able to recognise an anti-semitic remark because of the understated way it's said (Casual conversation no. 47).

The parents quoted here were inept in deciphering the tone, the attitude, the emotional pitch, the underlying 'climate' of the interaction, the mood of speakers or the 'feeling' of the entire assembly, nor the power relations between speakers. As noted here, they felt incapable of detecting covert racist undertones within the oration of politically correctness (although they did pick up on the speaker's cynicism). LeVine (1984) maintains that this type of 'knowledge' is unquestionably culturally-bound and often implicit, and thus difficult for those engaging in cross-cultural communication to interpret.

Further, equally important to their ability to decode the subtext, was their capacity to behave and adopt the appropriate norms at any given situation (Jupp, Roberts and Cook-Gumperz 1982). The question of 'how to' did not relate only to the verbal communication but also to the non-verbal aspects of the communication and to the general manners, that is, the appropriate codes of etiquette that needed to be applied in different situations. Indeed, the inability to comply with the unfamiliar protocol of communication was acknowledged by many respondents.

During the years that I have spent in the field I often heard questions relating to appropriate manners during open evenings and interviews, such as: 'what do you wear for an open evening / interview?'; 'can I bring the baby to the interview / open evening?'; 'is it OK to ask questions? (in an interview)'; 'can you ask questions about money? (in an open evening)'; 'what do we do if we do not understand a question in an interview?'; 'can we translate to the child during interviews?'; 'should we apologise in advance for our poor English?'.

I have also picked up some pieces of advice relating to manners, especially with

regard to schools' interviews: 'you cannot ask questions really, it's more about them interviewing you than a two way interview'; 'it's best not to mention money!'; 'do not be late – even if you end up waiting outside, you can't be late!; 'don't forget to switch off your mobile, they get very upset if it rings'; 'you all need to wear a suit, and for Jewish schools, you definitely need a long skirt suit and don't forget the Kippot' (scull-cap RH); 'don't look in their eyes, I think they find this habit of ours very unpleasant'; 'I always think it's a good idea to apologise for your English in advance, because they do try to communicate more clearly'; 'apologising for your English just attracts their attention to your disability'....

These issues, petty and insignificant as they may seem, troubled many parents in this category, and this preoccupation with the most basic manners and norms, created yet more distractions and impediments on their process of choice, as this respondent, a linguist, cynically explained:

> *Ornit: You go to meet someone and they have this accent which you can't understand, and they speak with a volume you cannot hear, and you can't get whether they are serious or joking, and you can easily miss their anger because its so understated, and they speak to you and to your child with the same patronising tone which gets on your nerves, so off course you become tired, confused and frustrated just by trying to read all these non-verbal signs... But you also make it difficult for them to read your signs...you are wearing the wrong clothes for the occasion and they cannot tell if you are a fool or an eccentric, you speak with a heavy accent and with your hands, as we all do, and also you have a challenging tone and you look into their eyes with no shred of politeness - and you say you are a doctor but sound as intelligent as a 3 year old.*
> *Ok so you decide that when in Rome... you think that helps? You get so distracted by 'how to say it' and 'how to behave properly' that you end up saying nothing or worse – saying the wrong thing. And until you get it, and until the language and the manners become a part of your repertoire – you lose out at every round! (Interview no. 17).*

Haslett (1989) maintains that communicative proficiency requires one to master the various standards and modes of verbal interaction that would enable him or her to function in different situations. That is, to learn 'to play by the rules' of a given cultural milieu:

Tova: It took me about 10 years to actually feel comfortable in English. At first I didn't have the vocabulary, and then it took a long time to get the hang of their manners of speech (Casual conversation no. 140).

Sari: I used to just sit there. I didn't take part in their conversations. It's not about my English; it's about not knowing what I want to say - if it's the right time and place for it (Casual conversation no. 132).

As seen here, these newcomers did not feel that they had mastered the 'appropriate' communicative manners, and their self-awareness often resulted in self-exclusion from the interaction.

This section highlighted the role of discourse in the choice process, by exposing the cultural subtext of the communication, and by demonstrating the ways in which the choosers' lack of knowledge of the local culture and inability to master the local discourses served to silence and censor, and to exclude them from the market interaction. In 'Cultural reproduction and social reproduction' Bourdieu (1977) notes that 'the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture' (p. 494). Although Bourdieu's attention is focused on class-based differences, evidently, his remarks apply here, as these parents confronted a situation where their linguistic luggage and cultural baggage have become a burden and an impediment to their participation in the education arena.

This section and the previous one demonstrated that the newcomers' communicative skills, or the lack of them, presented obstacles within the process of choice. In contrast to the international choosers, the newcomers showed strong inclination to engage with the market, and being alert consumers as they were, they assumed a high degree of participation in the initial information gathering stage. Consequently, they had managed to access various sources of information and to obtain reasonable amounts of formal information. Nonetheless, the information gleaned from these sources was limited mainly due to their cross-cultural communicative ineptness, and adding

to this their children's inability to participate in the competitive market-game, they found that the options they perceived as 'accessible' were also restricted, and resulted, for most, in their withdrawal from the main market into a secondary segment, the uncompetitive 'retreat' market. As demonstrated in the quotes above, at times, this process has led to the shrinkage of their landscapes of choice to the point of a single 'default option' school.

Looking beyond the amounts and sources of information available to this group of choosers, and the linguistic difficulties these parents experienced when handling the information, the next stage in this analysis would be to explore the type of information gleaned, its coverage, depth and degree of complexity. However, this analysis has brought to the surface puzzling and conflicting findings. I shall detail 'the paradox' next.

The paradox

The contradiction that I shall now portray may be simply described as conflicting evidence emerging from different sources of data. Principally, the analysis of the group's information handling strategies, was gleaned either from casual events where I had escorted parents on open evenings or parents' meetings, or from interviews and casual conversations conducted post-factum. While the evidence emerging from the open evenings, draw attention to the families' inability to handle and make sense the formal information they retrieved, the interview data often recorded months after the event, have given strong indications that despite their communicative difficulties, these families were not information-deprived, and that the knowledge that they have accumulated throughout their choice process was in fact detailed, particular, broad and extensive. Taken at face value, the accounts recorded 'on the spot' engendered an impression that these parents were conducting their choice process almost blindly, with barely any intelligible information. However, during interviews and retrospective conversations these narratives have generated an impression of knowledgeable and informed choosers. Here are some examples of the type of knowledge that the interviewees' have reported on retrospectively.

This parent discussed the school's location and travel arrangements:

> *Dana: I know everybody who goes to Broadwalk thinks that its location is unimportant, but I do not share that opinion. I went there one morning just to see how long it would take to get there. It took 40 minutes. First, they have to board the tube which is always overcrowded at this time, and then they have to wait for at least 5-10 minutes for the bus, in the rain and cold, and sometimes its full and does not stop. And you know, the area, it's near the market there, so in the morning it's OK, but at noon there are drug addicts and drunks wandering around, and on the side roads, you find syringes and old condoms. The head teacher said they become accustomed to the long ride quickly, but she also said they have to get the security people to spread along the main road up to the station, and that there were about 200 incidents every year of children being mugged and attacked - that is one per day! I liked the school, but the location did put me off (Interview no. 9).*

The next quote is the parent's reflections on the level of religiosity of two Jewish schools:

> *Liora: I wasn't really concerned about the exams and all that, I knew the school had prepared them a little, but I knew that at Tollerpath, being a new school as it was then, they were looking to fill the places, so the exams that year, that was just a PR stunt, to make the 'right' impression. What really worried me, especially coming from Newquay, which was Masorti (middle of the road RH), but very tolerant and had so many secular kids, so I did worry about how he would fit in, in a more religious environment not during school hours, but afterwards, how it would affect his social life, if all the kids were more observant than him (Interview no. 10).*

This parent discussed the Religious Education curriculum in a Jewish school in comparison to non-Jewish schools:

> *Galit: I didn't like the idea that Jewish schools only taught Judaism and not the other religions, I felt that was very odd. I mean, the children will have to function in a Christian world, you just cannot keep them tied up to the Jewish ghetto. In all the non-Jewish schools, they have to teach at least 3 religions, and all the Christian holidays are also celebrated or at least explained and discussed during assemblies, and I think that is very important knowledge to grow up with, which would make them more at ease in a Christian environment (Interview no. 16).*

The intake and ethnic mix of a primary school is thoroughly analysed here:

> *Dana: I knew the Israelis were about one third of the school, and I also knew that the population had changed, and that the school now had 50% children with English as a second language, and that some were asylum*

seekers, but I thought it was a great opportunity to experience real heterogenic environment, to see other cultures, and also I knew it was just for year 6 and then she would go wherever, and honestly, what was most important, that she already had one friend there, and after being so isolated and unhappy at Freeway, that was the most important factor (Interview no. 9).

The narratives displayed here indicate that these choosers were not information-deprived and suggest that in fact, they had reasonable amounts of knowledge and consequently their thinking, that is, the level of understanding, complexity and depth they displayed were fairly similar to that presented by veterans highly skilled choosers, and certainly higher than the international choosers described earlier, whose level of knowledge and information remained at a very basic level.

There are three possible explanations for these contradictory evidence:
The first explanation refers to the timing of the interviews and casual events. Casual events taken during meetings were recorded 'on the spot', as parents were literally immersed in market action and voiced their views, emotions and concerns, from their perspective as consumers located within the turbulent market arena. From this standpoint, they experienced their weaknesses most intensely and thus this became the main feature in their discussions. In contrast, the interviews were retrospective in nature, and were conducted when parents were no longer active players in the market. Their children were now enrolled in schools and settled in, and the sense of tension and risk was gone. Speaking from their safe landing-zone, they were able to articulate and discuss more rationally and thoroughly the schools' features, thus displaying their knowledge.

The second explanation addresses a theme that I describe as 'offsetting': the capacity of the choosers' middle-class cultural capital in compensating for their lack of other resources. Earlier I argued that these middle-class parents were able to carry with them into the market arena their intuitive ability to sense the nuances of the school's environment and assess the schools' instrumental and expressive aspects (Ball 2003a; Bernstein 1975). Evidently, their middle-class

detection and analytic capacities were hampered by their communicative skills, nevertheless, as demonstrated here, they were able to glean the necessary information, to piece together their general knowledge with the specific information that they have accumulated, and generate an intelligible assessment of the schools' features in this manner:

> *Meiron: We went to see the school, and there was something very stressful and uptight there from the moment we entered. The children escorted us to the hall, and there was a band there that played classical music and no one seemed relaxed. The children were called to the stage and you could see they had to learn their speeches by heart. No. I was not impressed (Casual conversation no. 181).*
>
> *Dalit: It was the only school I felt at home with. It was a bit messy, and the open evening was a total chaos, with who knows how many groups wandering about. I lost my group 3 times – and joined another one. But I guess messy is what we're used to so that's where we feel more comfortable (Casual conversation no. 400).*
>
> *Karen: As soon as we got passed the gate my husband said 'what a posh school – look at all those 'new-reg.' cars here' (Casual conversation no. 32).*

Ball (1997) claims that middle-class parents bring to the choice process what Bourdieu (1986a) defines as 'programmes of perceptions' (p.2), which enable them to decipher and decode schools and their educational environments. Their perceptiveness enables them 'to see beyond the basis of our ordinary experiences' and work to decode and construe 'the stratum of secondary meanings' (Bourdieu 1986a: 174). Ball (2003a) further argues that the parents' evaluation of the schools, that is, their 'classifying practices', involve logic and taste, that enable them to sense the 'feel' of the school, and to assess 'the expressive order that is produced by the social demography of the school's intake' (Ball 2003a: 59). Unlike the international choosers quoted earlier, the newcomers analysed here seem to be able to compensate for their foreign cultural knowledge, and their ineptness in interpreting the transmissions of the market, by bringing to the field their capacity to sense the nuances of the school's atmosphere and assess the school's instrumental and expressive features, including, importantly, the schools' intake.

The third explanation centers on their social capital as a source of information and its capacity, in this case, to compensate for their inadequate communicative abilities. The evidence offered earlier show that these parents were disadvantaged in their abilities to glean information from formal sources, but the knowledge they displayed during interviews was gleaned from formal resources as well as informal ones, and thus I would argue that their networks played a vital role in compensating for their linguistic ineptness by offering alternative sources of information that took their knowledge to new levels, thus enabling them to utilise their middle-class analytic abilities.

However, while their middle-class mind-frames and social capital may have been able to offset the parents' language incompatibility, the children's language difficulties remained a significant barrier to the competitive selective schooling market, to which the majority of these families seem to aspire. Later, I shall demonstrate how tactical choosing was applied to compensate for the children's lack of market aptitude. In the forthcoming sections, however, I shall focus on the ways in which their networking practices with co-nationals, and the usage of their mother tongue, minimised and deflected some of the shortcomings produced by their poor intercultural communicative skills.

The intra-net

Earlier I mentioned that the most conspicuous finding in this study was the significance of the choosers' networks in the choice process. This statement is indeed a defining feature of the quasi-practiced newcomers group, albeit the differences between the two subgroups described here – the communally embedded choosers and the detached. The comparative analysis between these subgroups produced intriguing findings, that shed light on the features of migrant communities, their attributes, their functions, their dominance in their members' lives, and also, the implications when absent.

One of the striking differences between the embedded choosers and the detached was the presence / invisibility of their networks in their narratives.

While among the embedded choosers nearly every report on the choice process had a collective aspect, a 'we' dimension, that featured the ethnic network that these choosers were a part of, the reports made by the detached families had a defining individual undertone, and their ties and networks were mostly mentioned only where prompted.

In the forthcoming sections I shall explore the networking practices that this group of embedded choosers displayed in an attempt to expose the ways in which schooling information was disseminated and shared. At the centre of the analysis offered here stands the intra-net, which can be visualised as the core of the network established among members of the Israeli community in London, yet still a fraction of its entirety: the intra-net is basically the communal school-based, Hebrew speaking mothers' and children's network, and as such it assumed central functions in the choice process. Picking up the story line, the analysis will also explore the ways in which the homeland tongue was deployed to compensate for the choosers' poor English skills.

Drawing on the social capital metaphor cited earlier (Coleman 1988; Bourdieu 1986b; Burt 2000; Putnam 2000) I shall explore five dimensions of social networks among this group of choosers: **the structural characteristics of the network, its gains, the network's subtext**, its **collective aspect**, and lastly, **the control mechanisms** it has applied throughout the choice process.

In analysing the structural characteristics of the networks accessible by newcomer choosers, and especially those forged by embedded choosers with the ethnic community in London, two themes have emerged from the data: the first addressed the **network's composition** mainly in terms of gender, length of stay, location, etc., and the second theme explored the **potency of these ties**.

The analysis of the patterns of networking among embedded choosers revealed that this sub-group relied mainly on their Israeli acquaintances as they retrieved information about the schools:

Adam: We spoke with friends...we received information only from Israelis.

The Israeli connection works! (Interview no. 1).

The majority of the respondents did not address other informal sources of information, and more typically, the Israeli network available to them mainly included families whose children were enrolled in the same schools or kindergartens:

Sharona: So many at Alton had kids at Broadwalk, and so I heard so much about it.. the ones who didn't go there went to Tollerpath, so those were the schools we all considered (Interview no. 32).

Ruth: How we came to know about Broadwalk? I don't know, common knowledge I'd say, everybody at Parkway automatically went to Broadwalk (Interview no. 13).

Another feature of the intra-net was its gendered nature, and this relates to both sides of the relationship – those searching for information and those offering it:

Orna: Dina was a key persona in the community, a woman with a golden heart who helped everybody with information and a good word, always supportive, always kind and understanding, very motherly figure.
Ron: She also knew everything about everybody, who is leaving, who is coming back, who is divorcing, who sleeps with who.
Orna: That's an important role in such a small community.
Ron: I cannot get what you call a community?? It's a bunch of gossiping women, who are bored in life, and so they got nothing better to do than to 'crush' everybody from morning till night. What a community spirit!
Orna: Without us you men would be living on an isolated island. We women, we create the networks for you, and we work hard to maintain them!
Doron: I must admit that's true. But this is an interesting question: are we a community?
Ron: I don't belong to any community.
Orna: I do! But umm, my community is made up of my friends, all of them women (Casual conversation no. 30)

The centrality of women in informal ethnic networks was noted by migration researchers (Padraza 1991; Gabaccia 1992; Hondagnu-Sotelo 2001; Gold 1995), and the key roles mothers tend to assume in the school choice process was also recurrently highlighted by researchers (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Reay 1998; Reay and Ball 1998; David, West, and Ribbens 1994). Gold (1995) found that Israeli women living in the USA tend to shoulder domestic and communal tasks in an attempt to maintain an Israeli environment and ensure

the symbolic life of their families. Here the dominance of women as information brokers was in line with their centrality in the school choice process, and the major functions they shouldered in community building: women were at the center of the intra-net, assuming the responsibility not only for the circulation of information among members, but also for the reproduction of the communal network and its maintenance. As evidenced here, however, its feminine nature seemed to operate as an exclusionary practice:

> In my own daily contact with the intra-net at my children's primary school, I noticed that Israeli mothers tended to congregate around the school gate, engaging in vibrant conversations some time after their children went to their classes in the morning, and often arrived long before the school day has ended and engaged in the same routine. This was in striking contrast to the Israeli fathers who dropped their children every morning at the front gate without parking their cars or waited in their cars until their children came out at the end of the school's day. These fathers did not engage with 'the swamp' in the same way their wives did, and maybe even felt excluded? (Research diary 22.5.98).

The features delineated above, that is, the centrality of mothers in the network, many of whom were unemployed, and the frequent and regular contact enabled through the schools' routine, meant that the intra-net was easily accessible by parents whose children were enrolled in communal schools.

Another structural dimension of the intra-net was its size. The interviewees' accounts suggest that the number of informants capable of offering relevant schooling information was large, often extending beyond the school's network by way of referrals. Given the monotonous, yet unorganised and casual features of the networking practices, it would be difficult to assess how many informants were contacted.

The second aspect of the intra-net was the type of associations involved. The interviewees' reports suggest that the intra-net included two types of ties and two types of functions: there was **information provision**, which was conducted by friends, friends of friend, colleagues and educational professionals within the

community. Most of the information brokers were veteran, more experienced parents whose older children attended the schools in question. In addition, much of the interaction within the intra-net included **information exchange.** These interactions occurred mainly around the schools' gates and other informal settings among families who were experiencing the choice process at the same time.

The next dimension of the intra-net was the potency of the associations through which information was gleaned and discussed. The findings indicate that the ties in operation were, according to Granovetter's (1973) definition, a mixture of strong and weak associations. The stronger ties included the families' closest friendship circle, most of which emerged and developed at the schools' gates and included both children and parents:

> *Ester: I remember the first day of school, we went with Ori to his class and there we met Carmela and Sharon, and we started chatting, and the next day we met at their house and then she came to us, and they became soul-mates (Casual conversation no. 10).*
>
> *Gil: Most of our friendship ties developed through the school and through the children's friends (Interview no.3).*
>
> *Doron: Here people befriend according to their children's friendships. If the kids get along well, so will the parents, and if they don't, then it is not likely that the parents' ties will survive (Casual conversation no. 5).*

As the respondents note here, the parents' friendship ties were often connected with, and equally dependent on the children's associations with their Israeli peers at the schools, and thus the strongest ties among these choosers developed among those whose children befriended. This highlights the role of children as social cement (Gold 2000) and demonstrates the crucial role these ties play in occasioning network tightness. Other associations were weak, in the sense that they were relatively superficial, casual and uncommitted. However, many of these relationships, strong and weak, were enhanced and developed into stronger bonds through the stability, frequency and orderliness produced by the schools' routine.

This links with the class aspect of the choice process. As Ball and Vincent's (1998) findings indicate, here too, the embedded choosers in this category were able to locate informants who matched their particular class segment: the more affluent families were networking among those with similar financial resources whose children enrolled in independent schools. Lower middle-class families networked with families of similar financial capabilities and gleaned information mainly on state-schools. Albeit their newness in the area, most choosers in this category were already embedded in different circuits, each of which communicated distinct type of information which mirrored their specific educational and cultural desires, interests and considerations.

As these parents were engaging with the segment of the intra-net they had access to, many were aware of the density and tightness of the network into which they were tapping, whose features limited the type of information that circulated among its members (Burt 1992):

> *Zehava: That year we all went together like a herd from Eden to Alton. Those who had older children at Alton kept telling us how happy they were (interview no. 29).*

> *Talma: Every bit of it (information RH) came from the 'swamp' (the community network RH). I looked at Alton, I had recommendations from Itamar and Alona, and that's it. I didn't look for any other school (Interview no. 31).*

'Following the herd', 'going with the pile' and 'getting information from the swamp' were common expressions among these parents who acknowledged the features of the community's grapevine that led to its closure and reproduced their own communal pattern of schooling. As Faist (2000) notes, one of the main features of tightly-knit communities is the recycling of information. This may mean that embedded choosers who tapped into the intra-net were likely to retrieve information mainly on communal schools.

Comparative pause: the detached

In comparing the reports made by embedded and detached choosers, three general dissimilarities emerged from the data. The main difference between

their reports was in the detached group's silences. While embedded choosers' reports were literally 'swamped' with the presence of the intra-net, and their discourses were part of a full ensemble chanting the collective jingles and cultural hymns that underlie their educational discussions, the choice of school among the detached choosers had none of these background compositions, and was handled as an individual project. However, as an individual project it lacked child-matching practices. Secondly, the common denominator between the groups was that both groups experienced similar linguistic and cultural difficulties, however, their process of choice as well as their considerations were different, and it appears that the presence / absence of the ethnic networks in their lives may explain these differences. The third area of dissimilarity between the groups' reports addressed their narratives in terms of contents and complexity, suggesting that those voiced by detached choosers were generally shorter, less detailed and thus simpler than the narratives articulated by embedded choosers. However, it must be born in mind that the only available data on the detached were their interviews as no data was collected by means of observation. Given that much of the richness of the embedded choosers' narratives emanated from casual conversations observed, this may explain some of the differences between the qualities of their reports.

The reports made by communally detached choosers regarding the retrieval of formal information suggest that their networking practices were somewhat different from embedded choosers in this category:

> *Ella: I asked my neighbour (elderly Hindu woman RH) and I went to see 2 schools in the area: Lansing which was the nearest, which I heard had a bad reputation, there was Goddard which is a small family school, very close to us, and there were two CE schools which I did not even consider. I applied to Goddard and did not get in. I was very stressed and extremely worried. I didn't know, what am I going to do?? And then I met an acquaintance of mine and she told me about a local school she went to 40 years ago which I didn't know about.. It wasn't very close to us but I went to see it, and I really liked it, and they had a place. What a relief it was! (Interview no. 14).*

> *Ada: I asked around and someone said there is a good school just two roads from here, very small, family like. So I went to see it, and didn't*

immediately realise it was Catholic. Also I didn't know it was only an infant school and I would have to move him around again in three years. Anyway, he loved the school and there were no problems there from the religious aspect or any other aspect (Interview no. 22).

These interviewees retrieved information from several non-Israeli resources, most of which were women, and like the embedded, most of the detached choosers obtained information from the parents' networks accessed through their children's current kindergarten or school:

Carmela: From that nursery he went with most of the other kids there to Woodside – a local school, very close to us, and you are asking if I got information about it from anybody? Yes, from the nursery teacher and the other parents at the nursery (Interview no. 49).

The main structural differences between the networks available to detached and embedded choosers was its size, their access to these networks, the strength of the ties involved, and the density of the networks into which they were tapping (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992). The detached families networks were often limited in size comparing to that accessed by embedded choosers, and often confined to the institution in which the child was enrolled. Although embedded choosers also retrieved much of their information through their institutional affiliation, they had access to other information brokers outside their immediate circle; this type of 'bridging' (Burt 1992) was uncommon among detached choosers. As for the strength of the ties involved, the detached choosers' reports suggest that their information providers were often casual acquaintances, whose ties with them were weak, casual, sporadic and uncommitted. In addition, this group exchanged information with their peers at the nurseries or schools' gates, however, these associations were also frail, albeit their stable and recurrent nature. While the intra-net was a network of tightly-knit ties, with a strong ethnic and linguistic foundation, the networks that detached choosers accessed might have been loosely-bound or dense, however, the interviewees' accounts do not disclose much detail about these associations, aside from the fact that they themselves were not strongly affiliated to any of them.

The main dissimilarities between the embedded and the detached choosers were qualitative in nature, and came to light when comparing the quality of the information they had at the end of the process, that is, its detail, complexity and depth. While embedded choosers had comprehensive, highly detailed knowledge, the detached displayed much more basic understanding and knowledge of the schools, as well as of the market apparatus.

Further, as I shall demonstrate in the next sections, while embedded choosers were conducting their choice process as a part of a larger collective entity, and were able to 'offset' some of the hurdles they encountered in decoding and 'working' the market system by leaning on their compatriots' networks to fill their informational voids, the detached choosers were conducting their choice processes individually, with no support system capable of compensating for their lack of market skills.

Between decoding and assessment

In the following sections I shall display some of the advantages and assets attained through the families' associations, and analyse the role of the ethnic community in London in providing these resources to embedded newcomer choosers. As noted earlier, this attribute of the network, which examines the network's yields, explains the ways in which social capital works; how connections transform into other capitals, thus enabling the pursuit of personal or collective objectives (Portes 1998; Zhou and Bankston 1994). I shall begin with the most fundamental and noticeable resource rendered by the intra-net to its members: the communication in Hebrew. Following the linguistic difficulties that this group had experienced, I will attempt to demonstrate the ways in which this particular asset – communication in the homeland tongue - had assumed an 'offsetting' function for these newcomers, by compensating for their inept linguistic capacities in English. However, this section is not about the mere benefits of translation or the comfort associated with retrieval of information in ones' homeland language. My main interest here lies with the role of language and discourse used among members of the ethnic network, in forming a collective perception of the education market, in evaluating and assessing

schools, in erecting boundaries that circumscribed their ethnic spaces, and in reproducing the communal pattern of schooling.

Earlier I argued that the choosers' communicative skills were a vital factor in gaining control of the choice process (Fairclough 1989), and demonstrated the sense of vulnerability and frustration that radiated from the choosers' narratives as they attempted to interact with a system whose communicative practices they could not decode. In view of these linguistic difficulties it may not be surprising that the engagement with the Hebrew speaking network was frequently associated with a sense of control, comfort and relief:

> *Gila: It makes life so much easier when you have all these more experienced people around you who can tell you what to do and how, where to go... Doron has helped me so much with language issues (Casual conversation no. 221).*

In analysing the type of language support rendered to newcomers by their intra-net, the most rudimentary, and most frequent type of service was translation, with those more proficient in English often helping others to fill forms, read and make sense of brochures and league tables, and literally summarise and translate what was said in open evenings and parents' evenings:

> *Orit: They said that the school is comprehensive.*
> *Liora: It's like the Makif high school in Israel.*
> *Orit: Oh, OK. But then, they said something about all the exams they do. I didn't get all that.*
> *Liora: It was English, Math, Science, and then I think they said General Aptitude, I assume they mean IQ test, and Verbal Reasoning.*
> *Orit: What's that?*
> *Liora: It's what we call Logical Test (gives her an example in Hebrew). (Casual conversation no. 424).*
>
> *Danit: (Holding a newspaper with league tables looking puzzled RH): Where is Alton? And Broadwalk?*
> *Orna: That's the Secondary school league table; Broadwalk should be here, look under Westway Local Authority (explains the terminology and how to read the results RH) (Casual conversation no. 48).*
>
> *Dina: Can you help me fill this form?*
> *Lily: Yes sure, what's the problem? (Casual conversation no. 411).*

Translating and deciphering formal information and helping parents fill forms

and write letters were the most common type of support offered to newcomer choosers by their more experienced compatriots. The following narratives go beyond literal translation and interpretation to 'cultural decoding'. Here the more complex features of schools were clarified and identified by using Hebrew terms, idioms, and slang words which were habitually used in the Israeli educational system:

> *Dalit: The head here is a genuine 'educational Personna' (meaning that he has a vision, enthusiasm, charisma RH) (Casual conversation no. 49).*

> *Sari: This is an 'integrative school' (meaning that this school has a multi-racial student body RH), and they are working with integrated classes (they do not set RH) (Casual conversation no. 14).*

> *Jonathan: I looked for an 'open' school (meaning an informal atmosphere RH) (Casual conversation no. 20).*

> *Shira: The class is really 'crystallized' (meaning cohesive friendships between children RH) (Casual conversation no. 21).*

> *Debra: (Referring to a teacher RH): She's a real 'Idishe Mama' (meaning: she's a Jewish mother – caring, warm, companionate, etc. RH) (Casual conversation no. 52).*

> *Orna: That head teacher could have featured as 'an advert for Sunfrost' (she's unfriendly, remote, cold person RH). (Casual conversation no. 23).*

These quotes demonstrate the collective attempt to make sense of the schools, by using esoteric linguistic codes. Garrett, Giles and Coupland (1989) argue that these are signs of the group's 'ethno-linguistic vitality', and that the attempt to conceptualise certain events in interethnic terms, emphasises the group's own collective stance and ethnolinguistic identity.

Moreover, I would argue that the usage of these discursive codes, in Hebrew, outside their own cultural context enabled these parents to make use of their 'inappropriate educational inheritance': as they were 'translating' the unfamiliar feature to Hebrew, the item was decoded, identified and named and the situation was consequently familiarised and standardised. Thus, this simple act of translation and interpretation may be the key to 'offset' their linguistic ineptness by enabling the utilisation of their middle-class decoding capacities.

Further, the usage of their homeland tongue and educational inheritance generated a feeling of control and an ability to exhibit a command over this type of knowledge. It also created an effect of familiarity and comfort and restored the sense of normality and routine to these individuals who were experiencing the upsets of the adaptation process.

The next narrative suggests that by using the familiar language and discursive codes, the ethnic network allowed its members a 'stress-free' and more controlled encounter with the English-speaking world, and also generated a more direct and focused information gathering process:

> *Dan: It is just so much easier to communicate with Israelis. Firstly, there is the willingness to help with information, and also, the information is more relevant to your needs. I went to collect my daughter from a friend and her tutor was there, and she teaches at one of the independent schools. So we chatted about secondary schools, and she recommended some schools I have never heard of – all very prestigious, selective, expensive, none of these were relevant to us given that we've arrived only 8 months ago, and he barely speaks any English, and that I am a students and she's still looking for a job. So with Israelis, well they just know what kind of information you need and which schools you might go for (Casual conversation 389).*

The communication in Hebrew made use of the tacit cultural knowledge which was based on a shared educational inheritance, and also related to the parents' experiences as immigrants, thus, the information circulated in the network was perceived as 'relevant to us'. But the main reasons for preferring the Hebrew speaking network went beyond the impact of the language, to that of the shared culture and educational values, and the tacit educational evaluative practices:

> *Anat: I did talk to some of the (non-Israeli) mothers I met at the school....We would chat about these issues, but, I somehow felt that our expectations from the school are different, our considerations are different, even our options were different (Casual conversation no. 130).*

This account highlights the perceived validity of the information communicated through the ethnic network, and the assumed reliability of this network as a source of information:

Daniella: When an Israeli recommends a school, I know we're transmitting on the same wave length, so if they say it's a 'good school', I know what to expect (Casual conversation no. 15).

As newcomers, these parents were dependent on others to point out 'good schools' for them. As most interviewees in this study, those quoted here chose to rely on parents who share their cultural and educational perceptions:

Debra: Our criteria for evaluating schools are different, I mean, none of us would even consider a boarding school, and most of us see single-sex schools as unnatural. New Springs is considered a good school - actually, Mrs Rose (the Head of the current school) recommended that we consider it. I went to see it, and believe me, most of us would see it as too strict, conservative, old fashioned, simply too 'square'! Not a good school in my dictionary (Casual conversation no. 133).

These narratives demonstrate that different networks apply different criteria to evaluate schools. The parents quoted here were aware that the terms 'good' and 'bad' are culturally bounded, and originate from the choosers' background – their educational inheritance. Their awareness resulted in discarding some sources of information as inadequate or irrelevant, and limiting their communication to the communal network. At the same time, the use of the familiar language and discourse, as well as these collective evaluative codes may cultivate an unrealistic sense of comprehension and control over this environment, thus increasing members' dependency on each other.

Cornell and Hartmann (1998) argue that every culture adopts different interpretive and classification practices. These thinking paradigms are applied in the choice process to review, assess, rank, criticise and mark schools, and to distinguish between the 'good' schools and the 'bad'. Ball (2003a) maintains that these interpretative practices are class-based. In his discussion of the classifying practices displayed by middle-class parents he contends that 'practical intuition and a matrix of commonplaces – prejudices if you like' (p.59) organise and inform the parents' reactions to schools. He further argues that these patterns of reasoning involving appraisal, discrimination and criticism, are part of middle-class parents' ordinary behaviour. As seen above, these parents displayed typical middle-class evaluative thinking patterns. Nevertheless, their foreign culture seemed to dominate their evaluation of schools. Being newly

arrived migrants and relatively new on the adaptation course these parents were unable to adopt or utilise the dominant culture's evaluative schemes, simply since they were not familiar with these thinking paradigms. Thus they continue to apply their inherent evaluative schemes, albeit their awareness that these separate them from local choosers and may lead them to different educational routes. This was where their homeland culture and their foreign educational inheritance transpired as a factor that may undermine and distort their choice process.

The illustration of the discourse within the Israeli network portrayed here, points to the significant function of the ethnic network, and illuminates the effects of the parents' symbolic capital on the perception of the public sphere. By using familiar codes of language and discourse, these networks facilitated the task of 'making sense' of the unfamiliar domain and rendered their members with the following advantages:

1. **Facilitation:** members of the group were not forced to make the effort of engaging in intercultural communication - they were able to manage in their own language. Although most of them acquired linguistic skills, and attempted to access information and interact with the English-speaking environment, the ability to manage the foreign environment in one's own language facilitated their choice process enormously.

2. **Utilisation of foreign knowledge:** the usage of Hebrew educational terminology generated a familiar interpretation of the unknown system, thus it enabled parents to build on their foreign knowledge and to utilise their 'inadequate cultural capital', without re-acquiring all the basic codes of discourse.

3. **Avoiding negative feelings** of helplessness, frustration, aggravation and devaluation, which may occur from poor linguistic abilities.

4. **Reinstating decoding capacities:** the abilities of newcomers to 'decode' the system, to 'decipher' its messages and 'read between the lines' of its transmissions was often reinstated by their engagement with the intra-net, and through the use of the familiar language and discourses.

5. **Validating evaluative practices:** the newcomers' abilities to assess the system and evaluate the schools were often validated by their engagement with the intra-net, and through the use of collective classifying schemes.

6. **Regaining confidence:** the newcomers' confidence was often re-established by exercising and exhibiting their ability to decode the school's features and engage in critical assessment of the market arena and the schools.

7. **Familiarisation**: the direct effect of the language was manifested by the sense of familiarisation of the surroundings, thus restoring a sense of normality and routine to those experiencing the upsets of the adaptation process.

8. **Capturing the local structure of feelings**: the use of the familiar language and discourses enabled members to rapidly comprehend the local structure of feeling (Williams 1979) within the ethnic community and become part of its reproduction process.

The engagement with the Israeli networks rendered parents many returns, indeed, many symbolic concessions, as they performed the function of linguistic and discursive interpretation. The use of the Hebrew language throughout the process of choice, functioned as a cementing agent that held the intra-net connected and unified, encouraging these newcomer choosers to concede to its evaluative schemes, which were habitually applied by their reliable and familiar Hebrew speaking co-nationals, and to follow the education route previously

assessed and endorsed by more experienced veteran choosers.

However, at the same time, by providing these benefits, and through its reliance on the homeland tongue for the engagement with the English speaking world, the intra-net also occasioned network tightness and closure (Portes and Landolt 1996), by encouraging intra-group associations while erecting barriers between group members and others. Garret, Giles and Coupland (1989) argue that this type of ethnocentrism may develop into 'fear of assimilation' which often reveals itself in minority ethnic groups' unwillingness to acquire the host's culture.

Echoes of tribalism

While symbolic facilitation may be seen as the main advantage secured through the newcomers' links with their ethnic community, the findings reveal many other forms of support offered to newcomer choosers by their more experienced compatriots. Among these, the expansion of the newcomers' links within the ethic community was indeed a recurrent function. The data demonstrate that in many occasions links were established between those seeking information and those capable of supplying it, with the latter including SEN specialists, tutors, child psychologists, transportation organisers, as well as more experienced choosers whose children were enrolled in the desired schools. This type of networking strengthened the relations between group members thus increasing the reliance of choosers on their Hebrew-speaking peers.

One of the most intriguing phenomena among this group of choosers was the ways in which the choice process was managed collectively. Registration forms were often photocopied and passed from one family to another, and schools and LEAs' brochures, league tables, OFSTED reports and websites details, as well as other printed material (newsletters, forms, lists of schools) were often acquired through the intra-net rather than from their legitimate source. Dates of open evenings, school visits, exam days, registration dead-lines, and parents' meetings were frequently passed along from one diary to another, with parents reminding each other of the events closer to the time. Many families went together to open evenings and meetings often sharing the ride, and others took

turns in driving children to exam days. Although less than one third of the children sat entry exams, knowledge of where to buy examination packs, practice tests and details of tutors were exchanged among choosers. Those with younger children often relied on their intra-net peers to pick up siblings from schools as they attended interviews or driven their older children to exam days, and many other babysitting arrangements involving intra-net members took place during the open evenings period. News of success and failure at entry exams, acceptance and rejection letters, details of length of waiting lists, appeals and setting results were quickly spread among families with advice and emotional support offered at times of difficulty. And at the end of the process, some families went together to buy the needed uniform and equipment, chatting happily as they exchanged shopping experiences and communal gossip.

These reports demonstrate the explicit collective 'we' undertone that dominated the respondents' association with their intra-net, which may be in contrast to the individualistic, competitive market arena that these parents had faced, but indeed in tune with the collective ethos that these families have imported from their homeland. However, it must be born in mind that albeit the knowledgeable and sophisticated aura that these parents may boast, their market positioning was relatively marginal and vulnerable, which may explain their need for companion and support.

The role that intra-net members assumed here was that of facilitation and impulsion: they eased and supported the choice process by providing and decoding schooling information, but more importantly, by delivering dates and forms, by issuing reminders, and through the creation of a collective task-force that handled, charted and organised the choice process, the intra-net motivated newcomers to remain engaged with the process. By assuming these roles, and by utilising their collective force, the intra-net propelled the choice process into motion, as well as promoted and pushed its progression from one stage to the next. At the same time, by offering this type of support and thrust, the intra-net actively restricted their peers' landscapes of choice to particular schools from which the intra-net itself had emerged and in which it had operated,

encouraging these newcomers to cling to the warmth and familiarity of its collective embrace. This may suggest, as immigration researchers often claim, that the ethnic safety-net can at times turn into an internment (Borjas 1999; Portes and Bach 1985). Indeed, this market management scheme was one of the main features of the intra-net that has brought these newcomers to the confined perimeters of the educational ethnic niche market.

The three types of facilitative work portrayed here, that is, **information provision and exchange** in Hebrew, the **communicative decoding**, and the **structuring and organisation** of the choice process substantiate Faist's (2000) claim that immigrant communities often shoulder facilitating functions that can be crucial particularly during the initial adaptation stages. The findings presented here demonstrate that these networks served as administrators and promoters of the choice process and were capable of lessening the fiscal and emotional costs of market-ineptness and marginality. Gold (2000) maintains that ethnic ties can function as a resource, which is capable of enhancing individuals' control, and as a medium through which social restrictions may be escaped. However, by providing these types of support the ethnic network was capable of encouraging chain-movements into specific schools, thus effectively tightening the boundaries of the ethnic enclave within which these families lived (Portes and Landolt 1996).

Schools as ethnic organisations

One of the primary roles that the intra-net assumed in relation to the international choosers was that of bridge building into the communal networks. However, for the current group of choosers, the school-based network undertook a more perceptual, perhaps intrinsic role: here the presence of the ethnic network in communal schools and its functions, served to transform these schools into ethnic spaces, or ethnic organisations - 'we sites', where members of the community could convene, engage in cultural or social actions, speak their own language, and most importantly, network to enhance, substantiate, expand, and weave more thickly the fabric of ethnicity.

The transcripts of this group provided many examples of the ways in which communal schools functioned as ethnic spaces:

> *Gila: I'm thinking of the first few weeks we spent here and how lucky I was to have met Sari during that turbulent time: I mean, she really helped me with the little details of everyday life: school dinner fees, swimming pool arrangement, where to buy things, you know.*
> *Rona: And where did you meet her?*
> *Gila: At the school playground, on the first day of school. Our sons are in the same class, so that's how we met (Casual conversation no. 181).*

> *Debbie: How did I meet the other Israelis? Just as I met you - at school (Casual conversation no. 9).*

These quotes highlight the role of communal schools as a 'mag-net': a meeting point, an 'ethnic doorway' and a channel through which new members were introduced to the community and gained access to its networks. Each school provided access to different strands within the communal web, while the supplementary 'Sunday school' served as a meeting point for parents whose children attended different schools during the week, allowing the exchange of information obtained in different schools and the formation of across-schools network:

> *Shirley: I don't get to meet anybody at school like you do, since the au-pair picks up my kids. The only place I meet with others is the Sunday school. (Casual conversation no. 494).*

These accounts highlight the significance of the choice of primary school (and the Sunday school), as a means for establishing links with the ethnic community, integration into its grapevines and participation in the reproduction of the communal-webs. The significance of this role, that is, the functioning of communal schools as ethnic organisations, may be further clarified by the findings that exhibit the scarcity of Israeli communal organisations in London. In fact, during the time the research was conducted, there were only two Israeli organisations designed to promote communal ties and allow group members to cultivate their cultural heritage, assemble and interact (the Sunday school and the Israeli Business Club). In contrast to Jewish congregations in Britain, the religious affiliation of the Israeli families described here did not become an integrating factor, as these families (most of which define themselves as secular Jews) did not affiliate with or attend Synagogues on a regular basis.

These findings correspond with Shokeid's (1988) findings of the Israeli community in New York. Shokeid explains the Israelis' reluctance to establish cultural organisations, as a corollary of their stigmatised positions as 'Yordim' (emigrants from Israel), and their 'temporary' stance regarding settlement. He argues that because ethnic organisations symbolise the stability and permanence of its community, Israelis find it difficult to establish their own, thereby making a statement of longevity and endurance that contradicts their transitory stance. This has led to a condition that Shokeid defines as 'invisible ethnicity' or 'one night stand ethnicity' (Shokeid 1993) where they could neither embrace their group openly and parade their existence, nor let it go. However, the findings of this study reveal that the Israeli community in London may have found an alternative way of institutionalising community life: as demonstrated here, these 'mag-net' schools have become the heart of communal life. Thus, it may be suggested that following the communal pattern of schooling, may be, for this minority group, the main course for regulating and institutionalising ethnic communal ties.

The findings presented in this section illustrate a circular process: the choice of a 'mag-net' school provided an entry ticket to the ethnic community, and its communal webs, and the associations with the ethnic network became the main mechanism that directed new members, yet again, to the 'appropriate' communal schools. The ethnic intra-net played a leading role in this process: it presented its members with a limited and pre-marked cognitive map of the locality, and directed its members to pre-defined and well-known avenues leading to these schools. These 'mag-net' schools provided further access to the ethnic community thus maintaining and enhancing community cohesion.
I shall attempt to untangle this process in the next sections.

Comfort zones

Earlier I argued that the ethnic community functioned as a meso structure in various ways; the international choosers were able to utilise this intermediary structure as a moderating force between public and private domains and a

'transit platform' between their old and new lives. At the same time, this intervening structure also served to direct these inexperienced migrants into the ethnic lobby. For the newcomers analysed here, the ethnic meso-level formation became visible as certain schools transformed into and functioned as ethnic organisations 'we sites', that operated as doorways to the ethnic community. Here the ethnic community intermediary structure served to create a 'comfort zone' that mediated between public and private sites, and also functioned as a retreat, a space of authenticity where these new migrants could feel at home, although home was away.

This is the essence of the next sections: the construction of an ethnic zone. This group of newcomers were fully subjugated within their 'ethnic project': establishing their ethnic membership and sense of place. Their accounts suggest that they engaged with their compatriots excessively, thereby expanding their ethnic circles and weaving their communal-net more densely, and through these connections, their sense of membership evolved, and their ethnic identities began to surface. However, the distinctiveness of this process among this group lies in its synthesis with their school choice project, and its grounding in and emergence from communal schools. This ethnic construction itinerary operated both as a cohesive force and as an isolating tactic, keeping group members connected together and divorced from others. Its fusion with the choice process gives the choice process and its outcomes a unique meaning – that of social and cultural reproduction.

In what follows I shall delineate three features of the ethnic community as it was perceived and detailed by this group of choosers, highlighting its station as an intermediary meso-level comfort zone: firstly I shall delineate the complex **control mechanism** operated by intra-net members that occasioned continuous ethnic clustering in communal schools. Then, I shall highlight the intra-net's **cohesive force**, which comes to light through the usage of persuasive discourses as well as its familial and intimate structure of feeling (Williams 1979), and lastly, I will describe the intra-net's **anti-integrative stance**, which surfaced through the interviewees' discourses regarding their

identities and sense of place.

Gate-keeping: school choice as a control mechanism

One of the most challenging themes related to the functions that the ethnic network adopted with regard to the newcomer choosers described here was that of gate-keeping. This theme depicts the ways in which the intra-net – the mothers'-school-based network – promoted chain-movements of newcomer choosers from one communal school (or nursery) to the next, thereby sustaining and expanding ethnic clustering in these schools.

In the preceding sections I delineated various characteristics of the school based ethnic network, as they appeared to and portrayed by quasi-practiced newcomer choosers during their first post-migration years. Among these, the tightness of the network and density, and the sound, structured, committed, reliable and cooperative spirit of these bonds, featured compellingly in their narratives. The analysis that followed, of the resources and rewards secured through these ties, verified the impact of these ties on the choice process, which was revealed in their capacity to reproduce the choosers' shared evaluation and classification of schools, to energise the choice process as a collective project, and to transform the chosen schools into ethnic institutions. These roles were mainly managed by bearing a variety of facilitating and collaborative functions and supported by their boundary marking discourses.

The argument that I would like to draw-on here, taken from ethnic economy literature and based on dual-market theory (Light and Gold 2000; Waldinger 1994; 1995; Scott 1996; Borjas 1999) is that ethnic ties can function as safety-nets, especially during the initial years of migration, and can offer substantial support to newcomers, but in time, these ties may become caging-nets, as they tighten the horizons within which migrants operate, effectively confining their members to a secondary and inferior ethnic market. This assertion links with the key argument that I shall present in this section, which claims that the intra-net recurrently sponsored chain-movements to specific schools, thus sustaining

and reinforcing ethnic congregation in these mag-net schools, which in turn, functioned as ethnic institutions for its choosers. By assuming this role, the intra-net effectively tightened the boundaries of the educational market, placing these popular schools at the heart of ethnic enclave, thereby structuring the educational 'retreat' market that these choosers felt confined to.

The research question that comes to mind is why would these embedded newcomers, who have already established strong and stable ties with the ethnic community, follow a collective trail into these schools? Given that these choosers were not as dependent as the international choosers on their ethnic ties to construct an image of the market, or negotiate with it, the answer is not straightforward. But the answer to this question is more about the 'how' than the 'why'. The research findings suggest that the intra-net operated a powerful control mechanism that perpetuated the educational clustering scheme. The answer to both questions – the 'how' and the 'why', can shed light on the ways in which ethnic communities sustain their structures, frail as these may be.

Prior to the depiction of the control mechanism I would like to highlight the differences between the control-mechanism found among this group, with the 'channelling tactic' identified among international choosers. In comparing these mechanisms, it became evident that their aims were similar, that is, to occasion ethnic clustering in particular schools, yet their means were different. The channelling system was fairly passive in nature since it occurred as a consequence of the choosers' process of knowledge construction, as a corollary of the veteran's knowledge, and the contents of that which they shared with newcomers. The gate-keeping apparatus detailed here was active and much more forceful in nature, and activated by strongly articulated persuasive discourses.

Hence, this section does not delineate a feature of the intra-net, but an upshot of its existence in these sites and a consequence of its conduct. It is about outcomes – how it has shaped the choosers' decision making. The core of this section is about network authority and supremacy; the network's competence in

redirecting people's reasoning in certain ways (Portes and Landolt 1996). Thus, here I shall delineate the various discourses, that in concert make-up a control mechanism, a control mechanism that is persuasive enough to block some mental doors while opening others.

The findings presented below display seven types of gate-keeping coercive discourses where members of the group attempt to control the entries and exits to and from communal schools:

1. **Defining an ethnic space:** here parents defined and specified the schools that felt 'right for us':

   Rita: I went to the open evening. I immediately felt at home there (Casual conversation no. 88).

   Rita: The school was a bit messy – but we all like it a bit messy don't we? (Casual conversation no. 51).

   Alon: In terms of environment, Alton is the only one that comes close to that of Israeli schools (Casual conversation no.19).

   In tune with their foreign educational inheritance and resulting evaluation schemes, these parents sensed the 'feel' of the schools' environment, thus defined the 'right schools' as those which seem familiar, that is, where the family and the school's habitus complement each other (Ball 2003a). Evidently perhaps, being immigrants, the schools that felt 'right' were the ones where the presence of their co-nationals was markedly felt:

   Ester: I remember the first day of school, we entered the hall and we could hear the children's shouting in Hebrew – we immediately felt at home (Casual conversation no. 10).

   By using this type of discourse the intra-net effectively defined the communal schools as 'compatible' or 'correct match' in the cultural sense.

2. **Boundary marking:** where members of the group defined the physical and more often the psychological barriers between 'us and them' in educational terms, thus limiting the availability of what is perceived as the

'appropriate' schools:

> *Nira: There are not so many options around – there are many Church schools in the area and lots of religious Jewish schools – I mean orthodox – so what's left? Not much (Casual conversation no.151).*

In the quote below the barriers were class based and private schools were presented as the 'unsuitable choice'.

> *Yonit: These private schools are not really a realistic option for us - our children will always feel out of place there (Casual conversation no.53).*

Ball (1997) reports of similar tactics used among middle-class families to direct choosers in the opposite direction, that is, to convince parents that 'private was the 'right' or the only possible choice' (p. 12). Below, the religiosity of the school presented a cultural fence:

> *Liora: New Bridge is much more religious than Parkway (a communal school RH), I wouldn't send my kids there (Casual conversation no. 20).*

In the next quote the psychological walls placed around the school were cultural and linguistic:

> *Daniella: I can't send him there he won't find himself there (will be lost RH), it's just too British (Casual conversation no.57).*

Ball, Macrae and Maguire (1998b) highlight the presentation of space as a dividing mechanism. Here the unfamiliarity of space transformed the school into a space of disorientation and fear:

> *Ruth: (Talking about an unfamiliar school in close proximity RH) I don't know...it seems too far away (Casual conversation no. 22).*
>
> *Dalia: Where is that?? I have never heard of that school or that place! (Casual conversation no. 213).*

Given that these families were international migrants and traveling across continents did not deter them, the metaphoric use of unfamiliar space as a control mechanism might be surprising.

Altogether these quotes highlight the speakers' attempts to tighten the educational horizons of choosers by 'bowling' some schools to the outer bounds of the comfort zone.

3. **Reassurance:** where members confirmed and validated each other's choice of school. Choosers were reassured and encouraged to register in communal schools, while those already enrolled in these schools were validated and their choice rewarded as the 'right choice':

> *Rita: Don't worry about it. You've just arrived. Give it some time and you'll see that she'll do fine (at Alton). We have all been through this, and survived this (Casual conversation no. 9).*

> *Ruth: Alton gives the children such an easy start. With all the other Israelis there, it makes the children's adjustment so much easier... (Casual conversation no. 4).*

> *Dalit: I was very happy with Broadwalk and also from Alton. Both my kids went there and were very happy, and their transition was unproblematic (Casual conversation no. 53).*

> *Gila: She had no problems whatsoever when she transferred, and now my Debbie won a scholarship at the Uni, so, I can't really say that she didn't receive a good educational foundation there (Casual conversation no. 56).*

As seen here this type of discourse is both about the short-term benefits and long-term educational outcomes of the communal educational route.

4. **Withdrawal:** the parents defined the competitive, selective school market as inaccessible, effectively withdrawing from it:

> *Ada: I can't apply to that school - Ron can't sit the test. He can't even read the instructions (Casual conversation no. 403).*

Marcuse (1996) argues that 'behind the invisible structures of the market, differences of wealth and power seem natural and inevitable, rather than artificial and socially constructed' (p. 32). Evidently, these parents did not contemplate the possibility that these schools may have special provisions in place for children whose first language was not English, or that such provisions could be negotiated with the schools.

5. **Rationalisation:** this was used to justify the choice of communal schools in educational terms. Here the parents rationalised their choice of communal schools by arguing that the mere presence of their co-national in

these schools, has affected the school's educational environment, which in turn affected the children's educational outcomes (motivation, performance, etc). However, while in the 'definition of ethnic space' discourse (no. 1 above) habitus matching was voiced in ethnic and cultural terms, here the focus of the discourse was on the class based educational norms, values and aspirations that members of the group share:

> *Beni: The Israelis in Alton – they 'pull up' the academic standards and results of the school. It they were not there I would not have chosen that school.(Casual conversation no. 256).*
>
> *Lily: It is so important who the children go to school with, because if they are in a classroom full of children who fool around – that will affect their behaviour and motivation. So with that amount of Israeli children around I didn't fear for their academic standards or motivation (Casual conversation no. 274).*
>
> *Orna: When I came to register the kids to Headland I saw the other Israeli parents – all of them live in Richmond (an affluent area) so I knew I will not be the only pushy mother there (Casual conversation no. 281).*

These parents were looking for schools that were 'right for us' in terms of their academic learning environment thus displaying their middle-class habitus matching (Ball 2003a).

6. **Warning:** this speech code was applied to warn choosers of 'the other schools' and of 'the choice of inappropriate school':

> *Jenny: Did you know that I'm transferring Sean back to Parkway?*
> *Rona: Oh, really??? Why?*
> *Jenny: It just didn't work for him at Riverway. After 6 months he still felt very lonely, he made no friends. So I'm taking him back to his natural environment, where his friends are (Casual conversation no. 359).*

> *Iris (to Danna who is considering an 'unfamiliar' school): Are you out of your mind?? There are no Israelis there! He would be all alone there! ...*

Here the other pupils in the school were invisible, as the mother angrily noted:

> *Hilit: Yes, right, he will be all alone there, just him and the teachers! (Casual conversation no. 85).*

Nillie: Isn't this the school where Riva's son was bullied?
Ronit: Yes, so I heard.
Nillie: He was the only Jewish student there (Casual conversation no. 114).

This type of 'negative choice' (Bagley, Woods and Glatter 2000), that is, the rejection of some schools, and the tightening of the choosers' landscapes of choice, was noted by Ball (2003a). This was often achieved by means of 'horror stories' about the schools. As demonstrated here, the choice of the 'wrong' school, with incompatible population, carried penalties – such as isolation, loneliness, bullying and repeated transitions.

7. **Condemnation**: this speech code was addressed to those who did not follow the communal pattern of schooling or have left the popular schools:

Adina: You mean she got in and you decided not to take the place? You must be crazy! You know how many people are on their waiting list?? (Casual conversation no. 31).

Sigal: I am so cross at you for transferring Orit to Meadway. It's like treachery! At least come to the Summer Fair and bring some Humous as you used to! (Casual conversation no. 59).

Orna: Israelis think that the other school is better and they move their kids around. I can understand that if the child is unhappy – but transferring the child because the parent is unhappy?? That's sheer stupidity! (Casual conversation no. 61).

This critical code of discourse, revealed the perceived relationship between schooling and ethnic ties and the rigidity of these definitions. Those who deviated from the communal path were perceived here as 'deserters' as well as 'crazy', 'careless', 'irresponsible' even 'thick' parents who were harming their children, and thus their action provoked among their peers anger, resentment and criticism.

The control mechanism delineated here demonstrates the 'muscle', and the authority of words. How language shapes the way we think about the world, experience life, and interpret our circumstances: 'language has the potential to hide or to reveal things from view; to lose or gain resources when thinking about

self and society; to coerce or to liberate; to maintain the status quo or to recognise possibilities of the future. Language gives a route for how the outside world reaches inside through the taken for granted words, signs, categories, codes and labels' (Danzig 1992: 293). As seen here, language and discourse were used among this group to tighten the speakers' educational horizons and urge them to commit to the 'beaten educational path' previously validated by others.

It seems that the barricades encircling immigrants' enclaves can be reproduced by the most trivial daily practices of community life, such as picking children from schools, as well as by the use of the mother tongue and the trifling but recurrent remarks uttered, unconsciously perhaps, among members, that reconstruct their reality as an ethnic group.

This leads to the goals of the gate-keeping mechanism – the 'why' question: Borjas (1995) argues that ethnic communities often exert conformity pressure to persuade members to conform with its cultural practices, with one aim in mind: survival. This may indeed be the case here: because these schools function as ethnic organisations and as gateways into the community, ensuring a steady flow of newcomers into these schools became a necessity in order to maintain the community's structure and ensure its survival. However, as noted, clustering may result in the creation of a 'segmented' market (Light and Gold 2000) – the 'retreat market' discussed here - whereby the ethnic niche is marked by its relative inferiority.

Furthermore, as I shall demonstrate in the next sections, the educational clustering and the function of these schools as ethnic organisations has lead to the functioning of these communal schools as construction sites for these families' emerging ethnicity.

Spaces of authenticity

The reports in which the embedded parents in this category revealed their emerging sense of belonging and identification to the ethnic community exposed three themes: the first was the **collective** outlook of the interaction; the second was its exclusionary **'us and them'** discourse; and the third addressed their **identities and sense of place**.

In order to illustrate these themes and deconstruct them, I shall draw attention to the central role of language and discourse in creating a sense of mutuality and collectivity, in erecting barriers between group members and others, and in constructing members' identities and sense of place (Philipsen 1990). Earlier I demonstrated the ways in which the local language and underlying cultural discourse of the education market served to silence and exclude these newcomer choosers from the interaction (Fairclough 1989). In this section, I shall do the reverse: I shall attend to the communal function of communication and to the role of language, in this case, the choosers' homeland tongue, in the reinvention of their outsiders' positioning and ethnolinguistic identity (Ting-Toomey 1989). This section addresses the 'cultural function of communication' (Philipsen 1989) that is displayed by its use in the creation, affirmation and negotiation of shared identity.

It should be noted here that the accounts cited below were specifically chosen for their focus on educational issues, in order to maintain a consistent storyline and demonstrate their impact on the school choice process. However, both types of discourses described here, the 'collective discourse' and the 'us and them' were articulated across all domains of life.

The reports cited earlier revealed a strong collective undertone that coloured the engagement of choosers with the education marketplace. This subliminal psychological empowering subtext, that demonstrated care, concern, mutual responsibility and trust was fostered by various types of discourses, many of which were plain and routinely voiced.

In the next quote the speakers acknowledged the practical as well as emotional support that they received from friends they had met at the school:

> *Mika: The beginning was so difficult – and having others around me, feeling that I am not alone with that – made a huge difference.*
> *Ronit: I know what you mean. Gila really chaperoned me since we came here, she saved my sanity. She supplied information, drove me around, advised and guided, made the connection to others, and enabled me to ventilate the stress of loneliness and frustration (Casual conversation no. 181).*

> *Gideon: We had friends who 'adopted' us at the beginning and simply saved us all the difficulties that they themselves had (Casual conversation 121).*

Below members' mutual sense of trust and shared responsibility was revealed:

> *Adam: Here (at a communal school RH) you can be sure that if you do not get to school in time to pick up your kids – someone will take care of them. Someone will notice that the child is crying or looking for his mum – and will go to him and comfort him and take care of him, and the school knows that, they know that we're that kind of community and they know we take care of each other, and they can look to other parents to take care of other children besides their own. In that sense we are a very strong support group (Casual conversation no. 118).*

These types of collective discourses and actions served to 'cement' the relationships among intra-net members, emphasising the collective friendship ethos of the homeland. Moreover, as the next quotes indicate, intra-group associations were given a special meaning:

> *Dina: We're like family here. We celebrate holidays together, we help each other, with small things like baby-sitting, picking the kids from school, we share information about almost anything (Casual conversation no. 142).*

> *Dalit: No one has a got the support of their family here, so what we have is each other: we rely on each other, we spend a lot of time together, so we develop the same sensitivity one has towards his own family (Casual conversation no. 66).*

LeVine (1984) argues that members of cultural groups instinctively respond to these messages; the meaning of this type of collaborative 'kin-embracing' discourse, was plain: community ties were perceived here as family relations writ large, thus underscoring the feeling of trust, reliability and intimacy that

underlie them (Coleman 1988; Portes 1998). This finding accentuates the meaning of embeddedness and underscores the significance of the school choice process as a means of accessing these kin-like web of ties and its support system.

The walls of immigrants' enclaves

This section goes beyond the warm embrace of the 'we' discourse highlighted earlier, to the divisive, boundary marking 'us and them' discourse utilised by these parents. Here I shall illustrate the ways in which group members erected and established barriers between their homeland's culture and their host's, particularly in the educational domain, and how, in turn, these psychological walls worked to sway their educational decision making in certain directions. My argument here is that this type of barrier maintenance mechanism works to strengthen the respondents' emerging ethnic identities (Barth 1981; Gudykunst 1989), which in turn, affect their perceptions of the educational market, and ultimately, their decisions.

The 'boundary marking' type of discourse quoted here, essentially articulated the difference between the two cultures, but the speakers' tones accentuated the differences between them, stressing their sense of familiarity and comfort with one, while placing the other as 'the estranged':

> *Tally: Their educational emphasis – very different from ours – we value Maths and Science and IT – these are the most prestigious baccalaureate exams and the most difficult faculties to enter at uni. But here, it's the opposite – they value English and History and their English departments are full, and their Maths and IT faculties are offering scholarships to every student who chooses them (Casual conversation no. 162).*

> *Tammi: She was crying her heart out for an hour – and the teacher just sat there ignoring her – there was no hug, no comforting conversation, nothing.*
> *Lily: Same here, and she just sent me out of there. I sat outside the class listening to her cry, and cried (Casual conversation no. 179).*

> *Orna: I met Ella and Yarden at the school, and on the next day the kids wanted to meet, and Oren went to Yarden's house.*

Orli: With them it's so formal, like making an appointment with a Doctor. The girls wanted to meet that day, so the mother pulled out a diary and scheduled 'an appointment' two weeks later (Casual conversation no. 40).

Sari: Their relationships are much more authoritative than ours. It must be nice to have a pair of tamed kids at home...
Anat: They must think our family relations are totally wild, with the way we communicate with them.
Sari: With our kids speaking to us with no politeness, not asking permission for anything, yelling at us and joking.
Lilach: I think we tend to comply with the children's needs, and so our children grow up, like in that joke, with two attached servants, while here they raise children that need to adapt to the adult world – how do they say it? 'children should be seen and not heard' (Casual conversation no. 133).

Mona: What do they think education is?? Children are not circus animals, you don't tame them; all she ever hears from them is that she's a naughty girl. They just don't understand how ***we*** *educate children (Casual conversation no. 134).*

The 'us and them' discursive code highlighted here demonstrates that boundary construction - which is an essential part in ethnic group formation (Barth 1981), is established through daily and routinely voiced discourses. Here the boundaries in the educational domain were articulated and erected, while the 'breach' between the cultures was pointed to. However, as seen earlier, these discourses affected the group's educational assessment and classifying schemes, thereby strengthening and confirming their joint educational preferences and choices.

It should be stressed here, however, that these boundary construction practices are typical among new immigrants and have been observed in many studies of immigrants during their first phases of the cross-cultural adaptation process and the 'culture shock' (Oberg 1960). The research conducted on the 'culture shock' phenomenon (Kim 1995; Adler 1987; Berry, Kim and Boski 1988) suggests that during the first stages of the adaptation process many immigrants experience regressive, and indeed depressive draw-back points. Feelings of frustration, alienation, exclusion, loneliness and impotency often translate at this stage into a deep need to cling to what is known, familiar and trusted. Thus, many immigrants going through this phase tend to embrace their own group,

cling to their customs and language, and form functional as well as emotional ghettos, where they can receive the emotional empowerment they so badly need from their more experienced co-nationals. Indeed, typical of this phase is both the enhanced self and social awareness, the excessive engagement in boundary maintenance and the accentuation of the dissimilarities between their homeland culture and the host's.

The boundaries that these newcomers have erected may be perceived as hard (Gudykunst 1989), as their discourse left little space for arbitration or appeasement between the two cultures, and since these boundaries went beyond the discourse into daily action, that is, segregationist action. Most of the parents in this group reported that since their arrival to London they have established ties mainly if not only with Israelis. This was often the case among the children as well as the parents:

> *Dana: All of my friends are Israelis, the kids' too (Casual conversation no. 9).*
>
> *Dorit: The kids do have non-Israeli class-mates that they play with at school, but they never bring them home. They bring home only Israelis (Casual conversation no. 28).*

Further, most preferred their in-group ties to associations outside the community:

> *Adi: I tried, I really did, but I found the attempt to establish relations with them too draining. Today all my friends are Israelis (Casual conversation no. 40).*
>
> *Ariella: I don't know, it's just too hard – so at some point I gave up. But also, there are so many Israelis here – and with them, it's just so much easier, so why bother? After all, how many friends does a person need? (Casual conversation no. 60).*

This preference seemed to feed back into their choice of school as issues of friendship and communal ties featured strongly in their considerations, creating a strong pull factor towards communal schools.

This section demonstrates the use of language and discourse as a means of constructing boundaries: the 'us and them' discursive code, used by these

newcomer parents, seems to construct the walls surrounding the community. These walls were spatial, social and mainly psychological, and symbolised through the use of cultural specific terms to define their separation from the host society, as well as mark the differences between 'us and them'. Since talk itself is constitutive of social reality (Foucault 1981), the hard contours drawn around the ethnic community had powerful implications not only for their educational choices but also for their definition of group affiliation and social identity.

Making sense, making selves

The literature on migrants' identities suggest that first generation adult migrants tend to maintain their allegiance to their homeland, many years after their relocation (Gold 2003; Zhou 1997). Given that the parents in this category were newcomers, and have been in London less than three years, it may not be surprising that both parents and children did not experience significant changes in their national identities:

> *Adam: Israeli remains an Israeli even after 20 years abroad (Casual conversation no. 129).*

> *Yael: My Maya, she's an Israeli kid in all aspects of the word. She speaks Hebrew fluently, she plays mainly with Israeli kids at school and at home. She has acquired all the Israeli manners, the bad ones too (Casual conversation no. 225).*

These findings agree with Gold's (1994) findings that highlight the Israeli emigrants' tendency to maintain a strong sense of national identity. The emphasis on nationality and community, which was one of the profound features of the socialisation process in Israel, was reflected in the discourse and manifested by the parents' sense of place:

> *Elinor: Israel is the only place I feel at home (Casual conversation no. 194).*

> *Sharon: I live here 3 years now, and I can say frankly that the quality of our life is much better here, but, there's something missing here. This place is not mine. It'll never be mine. I don't feel that I belong here (Casual conversation no. 137).*

Cultural identity is reflected by the sense of belonging (Isaacs 1975). The idea of 'belonging' and having a sense of 'place' seems to be a central theme in the Israelis' consciousness. However, this perception, most frequently voiced with reference to the homeland, was also pronounced in their discourse of their locality in London. Parents recurrently used particular cultural terms to mark and symbolise their 'place'. Many parents as well as children used the short term 'The Hill' for Hill View Gardens, thus familiarising the territory, confining its spatial contours, and stating a kind of ownership. Furthermore, Hill View Gardens was sometimes labelled 'The Ghetto'. The next conversations quoted here highlight the perceived rigidity of its borders:

Danna: So, you don't live in the Ghetto. Are you planning to move in?
Eva: Yes, we're looking for a house in Hill View Gardens.
Tova: I'm not driving that far. I'll visit you when you move inside the Ghetto (Casual conversation no. 51).

Orna: So you live outside the Ghetto now? The Ghetto is not really London, you don't feel like in London. We are outside, but socially it's very comfortable (Casual conversation no. 50).

Another way of stating a sense of familiarity and belonging to the ethnic community was revealed through the use of the term 'The Swamp':

Dina: We're all like family here, the swamp has its benefits and its shortcomings (Casual conversation no. 113).

Each time speakers used these terms they performed an act of identification with the group:

Adam: Yeh, we live in the swamp. It's an Israeli concept, and we brought it here. Here, it isn't a matter of geography but of culture (Casual conversation no. 118).

The discourse of 'belonging' demonstrated here regarding both the locality in London and the homeland, reflects the parents' ambivalence with regard to their social identity. Shokeid (1988) argues that the cultural identity of Israeli emigrants is formed within the limitations set by the negative value system surrounding emigration from Israel. Thus, he maintains, Israeli emigrants suffer an identity crisis that hinders their integration within the host society and encourages them to strengthen their intra-community ties. However, what these accounts revealed was also the re-invention of an ethnic culture, which albeit its

emergence from the homeland culture has developed distinct local features and discourses. One of these features was its collective statutory positioning as temporary sojourners:

> *Dina: Israeli remains an Israeli. I could live here for the next 50 years and I will not become British, I will always be an Israeli who lives abroad and a visitor here (Casual conversation no. 194).*

Shokeid (1988) and Sabar (2000) maintain that in their attempt to avoid the negative 'Yored' stereotype, many Israelis perceive their stay in the host country as temporary and assume a position of sojourners:

> *Michael: Almost everybody who lives here for God knows how many years, they all say they will return someday (Casual conversation no. 69).*

The Israelis' positioning as sojourners, and their strong nationalistic cultural identity, is also reflected in their tendency to maintain their original language and discourses (Gold 2000). All parents in this category spoke Hebrew at home between them as well as with their children. Most saw it as an important way of maintaining the children's linguistic skills:

> *Sharon: Daniel insisted on speaking Hebrew with him (7 year old son) (Casual conversation no. 146).*

> *Dan: I'll never speak English at home with them (Casual conversation no. 147).*

Here the parents marked their ethnolinguistic identities, not only by the mere usage of the language but also in their meta-linguistic discourse. Their commitment to their homeland tongue symbolises both the strength of their national identities and sense of place, as well as their dependence on their ethnic community for the preservation of their families' linguistic skills and ethno-linguistic identities. This type of discourse served to unite group members as well as erect and mark social and psychological walls between groups, by placing the other language, the host's, on the other side of the fence.

The evidence presented here highlight three points: firstly, the families cited here displayed a strong sense of attachment to their homeland, that was reflected by their identities and sense of place, their temporary stance with regard to their settlement, as well as their linguistic preferences. Secondly, at

this point of their cross-cultural adaptation journey, this group of newcomers displayed strong segregationist standpoint, with their discourse serving to establish tensions and divisions between in-group members and others. The third point suggests that the ethnic community was becoming a force in its own right in the lives of these newcomers, who were beginning to form a unique attachment to the community, develop a sense of belonging to it, and reconstruct their identities and images of reality through their newly acquired minority ethnic lens. In the analysis of the respondents' educational decisions, I shall attempt to clarify the ways in which these identities, segregationist positions and newly acquired ethnic lens coloured their schooling decisions and encouraged them to follow the collective blueprint leading to communal schools.

Comparative pause: on detachment

In the previous section on detached choosers, I have delineated their information gathering practices. Similar to the embedded choosers, the detached choosers' narratives highlighted the ways in which the lack of English proficiency hindered their capacity to engage with the system. The linguistic hurdles these parents encountered, frequently perceived as natural and inevitable, led to their withdrawal from the main market into a non selective 'reserve market'. Unlike the 'retreat' market that embedded choosers addressed themselves to, that was formed vis-à-vis the formation and the contours of the ethnic niche market, the 'reserve' market was simply a market of non-selective local schools.

The comparative analysis suggests that while both sub-groups faced similar hurdles in 'working out the system' and decoding its mechanisms, embedded choosers were able to compensate for their poor market-aptitude by tapping into their ethnic capital, while detached choosers did not have this resource to lean on and thus utilised their local ties, frail as they were, in an attempt to glean the necessary information. However, as noted earlier, much of the work of 'decoding' and the accumulation of knowledge among embedded choosers occurred through the usage of the homeland tongue, a resource that detached choosers had no access to and thus they displayed much less competence and

capacity to decode and evaluate the schools' environments. Consequently, their accounts revealed that these families often had relatively basic information at their disposal, some of which they discarded as irrelevant. Paradoxically though, their relative lack of capacity to decode the system resulted in more definitive outcomes (Ball 1997):

> *Gabi: One of my clients told me about it, and she was a senior teacher, so I trusted her advice (Interview no. 36).*

> *Shir: This was the closest Jewish school, and it was free – so the decision to send him to a Jewish school did not leave me with many options (Interview no. 58).*

But the appearance of conviction may be due to the shortness and relative lack of detail in their narratives, which was explained earlier. Most of these parents stated a belief that local schools offer reasonable education, and there was no need to seek out other schools. Their choice process was often practical, more about 'getting it done' than finding a good school or the right school. Complexity was often reduced in their deliberations, and schools were represented in terms of their broad qualities – LEA or private, Jewish or non-Jewish, 'good' and 'bad' schools:

> *Orli: Those were the schools that everybody in the neighborhood sent their kids to, and they were both considered good schools. I applied to both, hoping that she would go with at least 2-3 friends from the nursery (Interview no. 48).*

> *Yael: I didn't really like the school when I went there but everybody said it was such a good school and were full of compliments about the teaching, the standards, and the Jewish studies. I still preferred Newquay – perhaps because it was the closest to an Israeli school in terms of its atmosphere – there was something very family like there, but at the end the money issue was the main concern – we just couldn't afford to send two kids to Newquay, so they went to West Harbour (Interview no. 54).*

As seen here, the qualities of the children did not occur as criteria for choice. Similar to their embedded peers these parents often had strong views based on their own foreign experiences and imported with them their evaluative paradigms, however, their narratives demonstrated a degree of confusion and uncertainty about their own perceptions of schools, perhaps an awareness that these were not entirely applicable in London's educational marketplace. They

are outsiders and therefore 'uncertain of their classifications' (Bourdieu 1986a: 326). Further, perhaps because they did not have around them other parents who shared their background and classifying schemes, they were less at ease in expressing these views and following their evaluative instincts.

These parents appear to feel themselves to be on the outside looking in on the system radically different from their own school experiences. Having no point of reference as their embedded peers, some find themselves on a trial-and-error route:

> *Orli: She wasn't happy there and so after one year I transferred her to Pennywell – I felt that maybe a Jewish school would be better for her (Interview no. 48).*

> *Malca: He went from Washbrooks to Greenhouse and he wasn't very happy there either and waited impatiently to his move to the secondary school (Interview no. 53).*

This may suggest that the involvement with the intra-net may have enabled embedded choosers to engage with the market in a more informed and skilled way. The one preference that was in common among detached choosers, addressed the role of Jewish schools. These schools were often seen as a means for compensating for the families' detachment from communal life and Jewish heritage:

> *Shir: I am totally secular, my ex is Christian, so where will my son be able to get any knowledge of his Jewish roots? During the years we were together we did not celebrate anything except Christmas. That is why at the secondary level I wanted a Jewish school for him, although I am very much against that type of ghetto environment (Interview no. 58).*

This was a recurrent comment made by these parents: their inability to transfer their own cultural and religious heritage to their children proved a problem when living out of the communal circle. In few cases choosing a Jewish school followed an unpleasant experience in a non-Jewish environment:

> *Ilana: After one horrible year in Boxhill, all I knew is that I wanted him to be in a Jewish environment where no one would bully him. I didn't care that much how religious it was – I just wanted a Jewish school this time (Interview no. 35).*

> *Carmela: He went to Woodside which is just around the corner here, an LEA school, and he was again the only Jewish child and this became more and more of a problem for him. After almost 2 years I transferred him to Freeway. I felt that a Jewish environment would be better for him (Interview no. 49).*

Although some of them commented on the positive value of cultural diversity for their children as part of life in a multicultural society, as seen above, in view of their detachment from the community they sought places in Jewish schools.

In contrast to embedded choosers who preferred specific schools, the detached choosers have shown only one strong preference - to Jewish schools. However, this was often presented as a general consideration rather then a preference of a particular school. Other considerations rarely surfaced in their accounts.

In comparing the choice process of the detached and embedded choosers, the embeddedness of the process in the choosers' social context transpired as a powerful feature of the process (Ball 1997). The existence of a social enclave for one group and its absence for the other, were of prime importance in understanding the choice making for both groups. Surprisingly perhaps, the main factor affecting the process of choice and the consideration for choice among detached families - was their detachment, and their subsequent search for a socialising agent for their children which would reinstate their children's links with their heritage.

Market action: concentration and saturation

Castles and Miller (1998) claim that concentration of immigrant groups, whether residential or occupational, often become primary factors in the formation of ethnic communities. The findings presented here delineate a circular process within which concentration in education was both a pre-condition and a result of community formation. This process was occasioned by the ethnic community's networking practices in which the ethnic network assumed a gate-keeping function, by directing new families into the 'right' schools. As a result, members

of the community moved into particular territories in the educational market, thereby reproducing their community's institutional structure.

The findings presented earlier suggest that the group's educational clustering occurred as a consequence of their school choice process, and also out of their conscious choice to live near their fellow countrymen, and to educate their children in communal schools, in order to ease their cross cultural adaptation, to enjoy the support offered by these ties, and to develop relationships that will enable them to maintain their culture and language (Carmon 1996; Gaine and George 1999). Immigration researchers tend to agree that clustering helps: immigrants who live in ethnic environments fair better than those who do not (Borjas 1999; Light and Gold 2000). The embrace of the community helps immigrants escape discrimination that they may encounter in the labour, housing or educational markets, and the presence of the immigrant community generally facilitates the transition from the old to the new environment (Massey 1988; Borjas 1995; Gold 2001). However, as noted earlier, some researchers argue that in the long run, clustering has adverse effects (Waldinger and Bozogmeher 1996b; Borjas 1999), since immigrant communities offer benefits to immigrants that may urge them to avoid assimilation. The mere presence of these 'alternative environments' within which linguistic and cultural skills of the host society need not be acquired might hinder these families' participation in the host society, and especially in its competitive market arenas – whether occupational, educational or other. Further, clustering effectively tightens the choosers' 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997): in a sense, immigrants who raise and educate their children an ethnic enclave are operating in a 'one school town', thus limiting their educational options (Portes 1998; Borjas 1999).

Additionally, immigrant concentration can bring about structural changes in the general market that may hamper their own positioning in it (Light and Gold 2000). Saturation is one example of the ways in which immigrant networks may affect the local education market, which in turn may make access to certain schools more difficult. Educational saturation occurs when local schools have

no more places to offer immigrants:

> *Dalia: We are looking for a house, but I think we'll have to decide first on the school, because at Meadway you can't get in unless your house is* ***on*** *the school (Casual conversation no. 13).*
>
> *Mika: I heard of children who had no school place in September (Casual conversation no. 226).*

As seen here, saturation has indeed occurred in the schooling market at Hill View Gardens and noted by respondents. Some respondents felt that Israeli migration flows may be the cause of market saturation:

> *Ron: There is an inflation of Israelis this year. It's all because of us that Parkway is so over-subscribed (Casual conversation no. 53).*
>
> *Rina: Broadwalk has never been so popular. Since all the Israeli flock go there – you can't get a place there (Casual conversation no. 58).*

To the extent that they facilitate the search for schools and the choice process, migrant networks may bring the moment of saturation closer (Light and Gold 2000; Borjas 1999). As shown below, market saturation was directly felt at home:

> *Eti: Everybody else has already got in, so he is taking it very hard now (Casual conversation no. 411).*
>
> *Liora: Hi David how are you?*
> *David: Great, much better than yesterday.*
> *Liora: Why, did you win the lottery?*
> *David: No, but not far from that – Eli got in!*
> *Liora: That's great, good for you! It was a hell of a wait wasn't it? (Casual conversation no. 148).*

Yet educational saturation in one locality may have a spillover effect on other schools, and on other LEAs. In the next quote the parent detailed the process that led to the emergence of a new communal school:

> *Linda: Those who cannot get into Broadwalk go to Bridgeway which is considered a 'Broadwalk compatible'. I heard this year that Bridgeway had a full mini-bus with Israeli kids going there (Casual conversation no. 254).*

However, sometimes minority groups may establish their own schools, thus deferring the moment of saturation (Borjas 1999):

> *Ronit: We established the Israeli high school in response to our children's*

needs. The local schools would not take them because of their language, that is, their inability to sit the GCSEs... they said they had no places, but they cannot admit they fear for their grades in the league tables can they? And so we had to create some type of alternative for them (Casual conversation no. 43).

It is important to note here that albeit the respondents' perceptions, market saturation in Hill View Gardens did not occur merely as a result of Israeli migration flows. According to census statistics (ONS 1997; 2004), between 1991 and 2001 some areas in Hill View Gardens experienced a growth in their youth population as a result of in migration from several countries including the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Poland, Afghanistan to name a few. These immigration flows taxed the local education system, making it more difficult for residents to find a school locally, especially at the secondary level. Further, these trends were combined with an internal movement of Jews from north London to the northern borders of Hill View Gardens, and a distinct growth in demand for places in Jewish schools (Hart, Schmool and Cohen 2000). These international and internal migration flows into the area occasioned saturation both in those schools favoured by the respondents, as well in other, non-communal schools.

From the host society perspective, concentration is a contradictory phenomenon, which may affect the relationships between immigrant groups and host society members. Castles and Miller (1998) argue that some members of the host society may perceive concentration as a negative and threatening phenomenon, and often attempt to move out of these ethnic sites. The 'white flight' (Anyon 1997; Sabagh and Bozorgmehr 1996; Clark 1996) has become a known phenomenon in many major cities that occasioned internal migratory movements and significant changes in schools' intake (Bagley 1996). Others, including the schools, may attempt to drive immigrants out of their spaces. The resulting educational segregation may become a breeding ground for racism, which in turn forces immigrants to cluster together for protection, thereby creating the very ghettos they fear.

Tactical Choosing

Tactical choosing was the strategy most families in this category applied in order to address the saturated market conditions they faced. Ball (1997) describes tactical choosing as a tactic that involves applying to a range of state and private schools, where few of the schools applied to are defined as 'fallback' - 'least worst alternatives' (p. 10). Much of the tactical choosing visualised among this group was conducted in an attempt to gain access to communal schools, most of which were oversubscribed. Thus many of these parents applied to one or two communal schools and one or two non-communal as fallback options, in order to secure a place in a reasonable alternative in case their application failed:

> *Ella: She applied for Broadwalk, Boxhill and Sandford, and was offered a place first at Sandford and then at Boxill but not at Broadwalk. As you know she's at Sandford now (Interview no. 14).*

> *Orna: We put him down for Broadwalk, that's were he wants to go, and also, just to be on the safe side, we applied to Ladlow and Red Mount... (Casual conversation no. 406).*

In contrast to Ball's (1997) choosers who aimed to gain access to private schools and thus defined state-schools as fallback alternatives, these immigrant choosers often found themselves in situations where they applied to maintained schools as well as some independent non-selective schools, when all other avenues leading to communal schools were blocked:

> *Iris: We applied to Broadwalk and Boxhill, which we didn't really want, and then someone told us about Newhaven so we applied there as well, but we missed the deadline there. At the end we got rejection letters from all of them, and we appealed to Broadwalk, but failed. So by June we got really stressed — that is when I called you and you referred us to Holywell. No wonder the school is never oversubscribed – it's a great school, don't get me wrong, but how many people can afford that obscene tuition?? (Interview no. 30).*

As seen here financial assets were utilised to secure a place in 'a good alternative' as one interviewee explained, and thus material resources can be seen to expand the choosers' landscapes of choice, placing more options within

the families' reach, although some of these options were very much second best.

By applying tactical choosing these choosers have carved a 'retreat' market, of non-selective, private and maintained schools, Jewish and non-Jewish, that were not-highly-desired but not-entirely-undesired schools, yet that seldom matched their initial considerations or preferences. These schools served as 'fall back', 'default options' where the desired destinations were communal schools.

Defining moments: decisions

The parents' considerations may be divided into three types: the first, which was at the core of their thinking, revolved around the advantages as well as the shortcomings of communal schools, with the focus being **the effect of the presence of their co-nationals at the school**. The second type of considerations, still centered on **communal schools**, but addressed their **other features**, such as curriculum, size, ethnic mix, etc. The third type addressed the **features of non-communal fallback schools** applied to.

Prior to the analysis of these considerations, I would like to make a few points about their decision making process. Earlier I noted that each of the three groups conducted its choice process within differently delimited 'opportunity structures' (Roberts 1993) which shaped and often confined the families' 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997). As shown throughout this chapter, the quasi-experienced choosers' horizons for action were fairly narrow since they were situated between the safety margins of the 'retreat' market and the persuasive influence of the intra-net's control- function. This setting, and the fact that most of the embedded families chose to apply to communal schools (although some were not able to secure a place in them) resulted in their attention being centered on their justifications for following the communal pattern of schooling, a process they were fully aware of.

One of the noteworthy issues relating to this group's decision-making process was who made the decision. While among the international choosers the division of labour was vague, among this group it was clearly mothers who shouldered both the choice process and much of the decision making, with fathers assuming different degrees of involvement, but mostly being uninvolved especially when primary school was considered: 'he left it to me' one mother noted, 'I had to drag him to all these open evenings'; 'he fell asleep at the open evening' another mother complained, and 'he went out in the middle of the interview to speak on his mobile, I was so embarrassed' griped another. Perhaps in view of the intra-net's gendered nature and the fact that it was school based - this may not be surprising, since not many fathers took part in school gate gatherings. At the secondary level fathers were more involved, as were their children, with the decision as to which schools to apply to often being a family decision. Yet, here too, mothers shouldered much of the initial process of information gathering as well as the process of elimination, thus bringing to the family table a short-list (David, West and Ribbens 1994; Ball 1997). One of the fathers explained his disinterest in the process: 'it's like buying a lottery ticket, so I just wanted to make sure we bought the tickets'. Another man noted: 'at the end of the day it's not our decision – but the schools". Evidently, men were more cynical about the educational quasi-market (Carroll and Walford 1997) than their wives, which may explain their lack of involvement.

The comparison between the international choosers and the newcomers highlighted another topic related to their priorities. The findings suggest that among newcomers it was much more common to find family routines, time resources and financial assets being accommodated to the school than among international choosers. Although many mothers initially planned to work or study immediately upon arrival, their plans often changed, as mothers, realising the difficulties involved in relocation, often shouldered a central role in acclimatising the family to life in London, thus postponing their personal plans. These mothers were both able and indeed willing to accommodate their daily routines to the children's, often driving their children to significant distances: 'I'm the family driver here' as some mothers noted. Consequently, the educational

landscapes these families envisaged were less constrained. Further, many families were prepared to strain their financial resources in order to finance independent schooling, private transportation and child care arrangements.

This brings the discussion to the parents' thinking behind their decision to follow the community's educational path. Most interviewees were able to elaborate and illuminate the benefits emanating from the presence of their compatriots in communal schools:

1. **Lessening initial difficulties:** some parents perceived the main benefit of the Israelis' presence at the school in lessening their children's initial difficulties, as they went through the process of cultural and linguistic adaptation and as they adjusted to a new schooling environment:

   Iris: My first concern was to make that move as easy and as comfortable as possible. That is why we wanted Broadwalk so much, we knew that at least he'd be going with children that he knows fairly well, and the social aspect, not to mention issues of language, would be much easier (Interview no. 30).

2. **Peer group associations:** the relationships between Israeli children formed through the school were often perceived as a significant consideration for choosing a communal school:

   Debra: I really do believe that social relationships between children, they are mainly based on school, and on the neighbourhood. And I would like him to attend a school with children who live in his area so he can continue these relationships after school. Although I didn't want Broadwalk to begin with, I finally realised that this is the only 'community school' for us. Almost everybody who lives in this area goes there (Casual conversation no. 175).

Some parents perceived these intra-communal peer group relationships as an important factor generally both for the children's initial adjustment and for their psychological well being:

Adam: In my opinion, it's a very important consideration. She wanted to be with her friends - and we thought, well, have you ever seen an unhappy child succeeding at school? Social life is so important at this age (Interview no. 1).

There was a belief among these parents that the child's motivation or ability to learn is not set but dependent on their learning environment (Ball 1997).

3. **Linking families to the ethnic community**: many parents acknowledged that communal schools were the main route leading to the Israeli community:

Gila: All our friends here are Israelis. Most of them we met at the school (Interview no. 3).

Consequently, many rationalised choosing a communal school as a way of gaining access or maintaining their membership within the community.

4. **Raising children in a communal environment**: parents often discussed the importance of raising children in a communal environment:

Yael: It's just like living in Tel-Aviv here. The kids all go together to the same school, and in the afternoon they walk to each other's homes. If I can't make it on time I know that I can count on someone to bring them home or to take care of them. I wouldn't have this kind of reassurance in any other school (Casual conversation 197).

Ben: I think children should be educated in a community environment, like in Israel, I think that is the most natural way to raise children (Casual conversation no. 16).

5. **Supporting children's language skills**: Steinfatt (1989) argues that in the transmission of sociolinguistic habits to children, their communication with other children is essential. This point was picked up by some parents who acknowledged that the relationships between Israeli children helped in maintaining the children's Hebrew language skills:

Dalia: Every newcomer that came along – my kids had to translate to – so that maintained their language (Casual conversation no. 50).

Dan: These friendships with other Israeli kids, it slows their English learning, because of it, they don't develop relations with non-Israelis. They remain within the Israeli social circle, chatting in Hebrew all the time.
Elinor: Yes, that's true, but then - they improve their Hebrew (Casual conversation no. 155).

6. **Raising academic standards:** in many conversations parents' related the academic standards and achievements of the school to the presence of Israeli families:

> *Sari: Look at that list of graduates with 5 A* GCSE – half of them are Israeli children (Casual conversation no. 159).*
>
> *Daniel: Shai and Lily went to speak with the Governors about the homework situation, I am sure with that type of parental pressure we will soon see the kids doing at least 1-2 hours per day (Casual conversation no. 55).*

The considerations leading to the congregation of the Israeli families in communal schools point to the central role of community members in transforming 'a school' into the 'right for us' school. Underlying the notion of the 'right school' was a basic concern for the children's happiness (Coldron and Boulton 1991), and a clear vision of the schooling environment that is capable of supporting the children's needs – educationally, socially and emotionally. 'I just want to see him happy' was a recurrent theme among these parents, and this was the essence of their child matching practices. Their children's happiness was something of a worry or a concern, as these parents have seen their kids struggle for the first one or two years since their relocation and were now seeking a relief, a break from the difficulties, which communal schools seemed to promise. The child matching concept displayed here was short-term - a matter of adjustment to the new school, to its routines and norms, as well as social in its nature: it was about having or making friendships and feeling a sense of place, rather than achieving long-term educational goals or realising specific talents. This may explain why although academic achievements were used to discriminate between schools, the awareness of poor academic standards rarely led to rejection.

Most of these families applied to communal schools, often placing the presence of other community members in the school over and above any other feature of the school and any other consideration. However, some families were battling with these issues often displaying strong criticism of the chosen schools.

Here the buildings of two communal schools were fiercely criticised:

> *Alon: Parkway looks like a jail – look at that fence, the gate with the guard shed, the tiny play area.*
> *Orna: You want your kids to be safe don't you?? And also, you are forgetting – it rains here most of the year so what is the point of having a big outdoor play area? They have a huge hall and that is where they spend most of their breaks (Casual conversation no. 151).*

> *Limor: The building, its just so unpleasant not to mention that it stinks, its dilapidated, there is just no sense of aesthetics in that school.*
> *Ronit: Umm, yes, but honestly, how many kids care about that? One look at their rooms will give you a clue as to how much teenagers care about tidiness and aesthetics (Casual conversation no. 225).*

Here the Religious Education was under the spotlight in two communal schools:

> *Lily: They do not teach any other religion except Judaism, how narrow minded is that? (Casual conversation no. 363).*

> *Hagit: My daughter is totally confused with all these religious celebrations at the school, I think she needs more emphasis on Judaism – more about her heritage to understand what is hers and what isn't (Casual conversation no. 121).*

The relationship between Israeli children and others were criticised:

> *Limor: I heard there were clashes between the Israeli clique and the Jewish kids at Broadwalk.*
> *Osnat: I did not hear of clashes, just that they do not mingle. But it's our kids' fault as well - they are really cliquey (Casual conversation no. 108).*

Here the academic standards at one of the schools were devalued:

> *Galia: I heard from a friend of mine that when she returned (to Israel) the kids had immense difficulties – there was a real gap between what they learned at Alton and what they were expected to do in Israel, especially in Math.*
> *Lily: I don't know that this is true anymore, but anyway, my kids transferred from Alton to Tollerpath, and had no problem whatsoever in any topic, including Maths. And I did not employ a tutor (Casual conversation 116).*

These are only some of the critical comments made by parents with regard to communal schools that they have applied to. Other aspects of these schools which received criticism were: the English curriculum and mainly the scarcity of English support for ESL children, the lack of citizenship education, the poor

quality of Hebrew curriculum or teaching, the outdated teaching methods, the rareness of homework, the rigid or loose disciplinary practices, the formal relationship between children and their teachers, the shortage of social activity in the school or after school, the lack of social awareness by teachers, the low levels of parental involvement, the poor or strict management regime, the bad OFSTED results, the intake in terms of class, ethnic mix, the ghettoisation of Jewish schools, the cliqueyness of its population, the uniform, the food, the swimming pool or lack of it, the IT equipment, the sports hall or its inadequacy. Indeed, the list of considerations was endless, as one respondent noted: 'remind me why we are all going to that school?' It appears that the one consideration that mattered was the presence of their co-nationals.

This is not to say that these parents could not see the positive sides of these communal schools. Here are some positive notes voiced about these schools: Here the ethnic mix of the school was noted and applauded:

> *Alona: This is a real integrative environment – with all these cultures and languages I don't know how they do this – but I salute them for that (Casual conversation no. 17).*

> *Sigal: It's multi-cultural and integrative in the real sense of the word – not only that they have nearly half of the kids with English as a second language, but also they have rich and poor people here, they have children with disabilities and SEN integrated in the classes – what can I say? I think it's wonderful for our kids to be in such a tolerant environment (Casual conversation no. 12).*

Here the orderliness and disciplinary practices were admired:

> *Adina: Their approach, it's so calm and quiet - the atmosphere is so peaceful, there is no stress, no competition, no hurry to do more, everything is so tidy and organised, the teachers speak so quietly (Casual conversation no. 128).*

> *Sigal: They deal with violence so efficiently – the moment it happens – physical or verbal – they stop it and punish both kids, so they learn very quickly (Casual conversation no. 189).*

These are only few of the positive comments made by parents with regard to the communal school they have applied to, or voiced by those already enrolled. Other positive aspects receiving attention were: the respect for history and

culture, the amount of homework, the disciplinary practices, the relationship between children and their teachers, the positive OFSTED results, the intake in terms of class, ethnic mix, the Jewish population in the school, the relaxed behaviour of the children, the uniform, the food, the swimming pool, the way holidays were celebrated, the Religious Education curriculum, the head's management style, the sports activities, and also – the SATs, GCSE and A-level results and the percentage of graduates going to prestigious universities.

These parents considered every aspect of these communal schools, often debating certain aspects of the school in an attempt to evaluate its merit. These excessive deliberations over communal schools were in striking contrast to the way they considered their fallback options. Here schools were barely analysed and rarely discussed in this way. They appear to be haphazardly labelled as either 'good' or 'bad'. Treating them as fall back options, these parents often knew very little about these schools and tended to rely only on the formal information they obtained to make a decision.

> *Anat: The teacher said her kids went there, so I ticked the box just in case (Casual conversation no. 51).*

In many of these discussions regarding the 'fall back options' the unspoken topic was the absence of their co-nationals, which seemed to underlie the parents' perceptions of these schools and their (un)desirability, thus rendering their views regarding them as superficial.

What these considerations indicate, is that identities mattered: the ethnic project seemed to be the hidden agenda around which their choice process revolved. Evidently this was in lieu of their integration in the general society. These choosers and their children displayed a strong Israeli national identity, and (with the exception of few families) a strong secular identity, and these affected their educational preferences. As their ethnic identities began to develop, these identities took central stage in their decisions, creating a significant pull factor towards communal schools. Nevertheless, most parents in this group did not perceive their national identities or their religious orientations as principal considerations, but as elements that were implanted in and intertwined with

their other priorities, evaluations, and newly developed group attachment and sense of belonging. Their networking practices and the control mechanism delineated earlier marked their ethnicity forcefully, as they tracked their co-national footsteps, following an ethnic pathway which was outlined and established by others, who share their identities, their culture and their circumstances as a minority ethnic group raising a second generation of immigrant children in London.

It appears that this group's 'defining moment' resulted yet again in educational closure, with their views and justifications addressing the main project that these families were engaging with: their ethnicity. Thus the question that I posed earlier still remains: at the end of the road, will this ethnic ghetto become an enduring establishment for these families, or a provisional energy station on their immigration expedition?

And lastly...

This chapter details the chronicles of newly arrived immigrant families as they adapt to their new surroundings, engage in community building, and as they negotiate with the educational marketplace in their locality. My focus in this chapter has been on the embedded choosers, and the interaction between these families and the educational marketplace, as it was perceived from their positions as members of a minority ethnic group and visualised through their ethnic lens.

The story line commenced with their quest for information, and concluded with their decision-making. It followed these families as they, with the support of the intra-net – the school-based mother's ethnic network, constructed a virtual ethnic sphere, a comfort zone, within which the choice of school was intertwined with their choice to be or not to be a member of the community and an ethnic being. The story went on to explore the ways in which this jointly engineered ethnic impression structured the families' choice process and their decisions, leading to the reproduction of the ethnic niche market, to clustering and closure.

Throughout the chapter the devices that yield ethnic clustering in education were uncovered, suggesting that the choosers' state of market-ineptness encouraged ethnic closure. The narratives of the families included in this category, demonstrate the susceptible position of those who lack in market-fitness, stressing the significance of cultural, social, and symbolic assets in gaining access to the choice process. However, at the same time, their stories exposed the ways in which their middle-class resources and their ethnic resources – particularly their cultural, financial, and social capitals - were deployed to offset their other deficits.

At the heart of the story presented in this chapter, stood the intra-net, visualised here through its collective stance and cooperative action, and the numerous tasks and actions its members shouldered as they energised the choice process as a collective project. By operating as a social enterprise to others, and by positioning the chosen schools at the hub of the ethnic firm, members of the intra-net re-engineered and maintained the existing ethnic clustering in education, by ensuring a steady stream of new families pouring into communal schools. More importantly, by promoting concentration in particular schools, the ethnic network provided the foundation for the institutionalisation of the community, as these community schools functioned as ethnic gateways as well as ethnic focal points.

The school-choice storyline detailed here exposed a hidden agenda, or perhaps a second, parallel plot: the formation and re-engineering of the ethnic commune and ethnic identities. The stories narrated here are not only about the choice of school and the families' cross cultural adaptation process, but mainly about the ways in which the ethnic community co-opted and attracted new members into its sphere, with the main ethnic focal point, being schools. As the families cited here became members of the community, their ethnic identities and sense of belonging began to form, and their membership became a frame through which these parents viewed their lives in London and their children's educational experiences. The more involved they were in the Israeli community - the larger the domain this membership structured or embraced - the more

likely they were to perceive the world through that distinctive frame, and construe their circumstances accordingly (Cornell 1996). The comparison between the embedded and the detached choosers indeed served to accentuate the differences in the construction of the circumstances of their lives.

Earlier I proposed that in immigration areas schools often function as the main re-socialisation agent for immigrant families, and can become a prime channel for integration. However, as seen here, depending on the school's population, schools can also serve as a primary route for ethnic segregation and their institutionalisation. Thus, the choice of school among these immigrant families may mirror not only their market-fitness but also, their inclination towards integration in the host society, that is, their propensity to adapt to their new homeland by altering their culture and identities.

The story of the newcomers quasi-practiced choosers ends here, at the point where their anti-integrative standpoint is clearly stated, and the grip, as well as the embrace of the ethnic community is intensely sensed. This is also the opening note for the next chapter, where new story line begins at the same setting – the ethnic club. The question that the veterans grapple with is not only: 'to be (ethnic) or not to be?' but also 'who to be'?? or as my own daughter asked: 'can I be British and still be me?'...

10. Negotiating Terrains: The Competent Veteran Choosers

This chapter places under the spotlights the competent veteran families as they search for and choose a socialising agent for their children. This category includes veteran families (n=34) who have lived in London between 4-25 years and described their recent choices of schools. All families have had previous school choice experiences since they immigrated to Britain, and most of their reports were associated with secondary school or sixth-form transfers with some reporting on a voluntary transfer to a more desired primary or secondary school. This group also includes most of the intermarried families who took part in this study.

This group of choosers resembles those middle-class families described by Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1996) as 'privileged / skilled choosers': they have both the inclination and capacity to engage with the education market effectively, and they utilise their economic, cultural and social capitals in order to achieve their long-term educational goals. Yet, their market skills were not the only factors affecting their positioning in the educational marketplace; their identities and assimilative stance were also of prime importance.

There were four key qualities to this type of chooser. The first marks their **inclination and capacities**: the narratives of this group indicate a strong inclination of parents and children to engage with the choice process and motivation to compete for the best. Although most did not value the idea of school choice per-se, they have shown a marked aptitude to engage with the market effectively, and make the most of the potential of choice. Their financial, social and cultural capitals were also fully utilised to ensure access to their desired schools.

Secondly, among this group, **identities mattered**. Unlike the newcomers who were choosing a school for their children, often unaware of the potential impact of the school's environment on their children's identities, these parents were consciously choosing a socialisation agent, and their choice process displayed an array of social and cultural principles, beliefs, values and concerns relating to their children's identities together with strong academic aspirations, and plans or goals for their children's future, which emanated from their middle-class dispositions. From this multi-directed standpoint, choosing a school often emerged as a perplexing and intricate process with few guarantees as to the outcomes. In some ways the more skilled these parents were in collecting data, analysing and decoding the schools' features, the more difficult it became to determine how the different factors might affect the child's identity and his academic aptitude. In a way, no school was perfect, and the choice process was a matter of compromise.

The third feature of the choice process among these choosers was its **social context**. Similar to the other groups of choosers, the embedded families were closely engaged with their ethnic networks, exchanging information, circulating gossip and assisting less experienced choosers. Unlike the other groups, this group's embeddedness in the ethnic community originated from a position of power and authority; they were often on the giving side of the relationship, and their authoritative aura often emerged as a corollary of their children's successes in gaining entry to prestigious and highly oversubscribed schools, and in demonstrating academic success once entered.

The fourth dimension that surfaced through this group's narratives was their sense of **risk**: the risk of cultural and social reproduction (Bourdieu 1986a; Ball 2003b), both in the class sense and in the ethnic sense. These immigrant families have initiated an event in their lives that placed their own, as well as their children's social status and cultural identities at risk. They were locked in a daily battle with their host environment over their children's cultural and social positioning and identities and this struggle came to light through the school choice process most vividly. Throughout the sections that follow, I shall probe

into the parents' sense of risk, and highlight some of the strategies they applied and resources they deployed to ensure inter-generational transmission.

In addition to the key characteristics highlighted here, there were also two central sub-divisions within this group: firstly, between **'embedded choosers'** (n=26) and **'detached choosers'** (n=8): the latter consisting mostly of intermarried families, where one partner was born and raised in Britain. The second subdivision appeared among embedded choosers, between '**devotees'**, (n=20) who followed the communal pattern of schooling into communal schools, and **'non-conformists'** (n=6) who wished 'to break the herd pattern' as one interviewee put it, and chose other, often more prestigious schools. It should be reiterated here that access to communal schools was not straightforward as most schools were oversubscribed and difficult to gain access into. As I shall illustrate, these sub-groups perceived the choice process differently in terms of its goals and considerations, although their process was relatively similar. The comparative aspect their reports offer, emphasise the socialising functions of the ethnic community and the role of schools as a communal structures.

One of the difficulties in writing this chapter was that of replication: the voices and experiences of veteran choosers were already cited in the previous chapters, sometimes as the key players and at times as a background tune, as they aided their less experienced compatriots. Further, there were some parallels between their experiences and that of newcomer choosers. Thus, in order to avoid repetition, I shall focus here on the notes that make them distinctive as a group, while leaving the similarities between them and other groups of choosers implicit.

In what follows I shall examine the ways in which the choosers' skills and resources, and their embeddedness in the ethnic community, affected their thinking, their identities and their considerations for choice. In order to maintain a coherent storyline, much of the chapter will concentrate on the actions of embedded choosers, both the devotees and the nonconformists, while at times I shall take a 'comparative intermission' to describe the practices of detached

choosers. The chapter will begin with the choosers' information gathering tactics and will close with an examination of their decision-making.

The lure of the market: Mercedes schools

The majority of the embedded respondents in this category commenced the choice process nearly 10-24 months prior to the schools' registration closing date. Unlike the other groups of choosers whose first phase in their process, was the search for information, the embedded group delineated here already had fair amounts of informal knowledge in their possession, especially on communal schools, and thus their initial stage focused on preparing their children for the process of choice by tutoring them for entry exams, and other selection procedures and discussing future possibilities among family members. Some began to collate the needed documentation for the child's achievement portfolio. In September, the search for formal information began and this focused mainly on prestigious and selective non-communal schools. This was because these parents already had in-depth informal knowledge on communal schools and thus their attention was drawn to the schools that they had less knowledge of. Most families did not confine themselves to 'local' nor 'communal schools' and in their attempt to gather information often took interest in schools in adjacent LEAs, with some schools requiring more than an hour drive from the family's home. Comparatively, the spatial boundaries these families drew were much wider than the other groups' and this included both subgroups. With few exceptions, most families obtained formal information about 4-7 secondary schools or colleges. Even those choosing schools for the younger children in the family, who had decided from the start that they would follow their sibling's footsteps, still felt obliged to 'open possibilities' for their children (Ball 2003a: 55) and thus searched for information, and went with their children to open evenings at other schools 'to browse around' as one mother articulated it.

As noted earlier, the primary list of the schools on which information would be collected, served to mark the contours of the choosers' initial landscapes of choice, which, among these families were fairly wide. From this stage on, the

process of elimination began, with schools being either crossed-off the list or applied to. The next phase was decision-making as to the schools the child would apply to and where relevant, sit exams. Most devotees stated a preference to one communal school, while most of the non-conformists arrived at a situation where more than one school was acceptable or equally desired. This phase was followed by the application stage, where parents were filling registration forms, composing letters, accumulating and arranging the relevant paperwork and sending their forms to the schools with considerable keenness and anticipation. Those families who decided that younger children would follow their older siblings often withdrew from their initial plans, and applied to the desired school only, knowing in advance that their child's place was secured. Most other families applied to their desired schools, while adding to their lists a few 'fall-back' options, 'just to be on the safe side' as one parent said.

The following stage included entry exams, interviews and other selection procedures. Here the application of market tactics appeared, as some children sat exams in five schools, just 'to get a practice', and also to ensure 'that we would be the ones making the choice, not the school' as one parent iterated it. The process ended, for nearly all of the families in this category, with at least one desired school offering the child a place, but most children received two or three positive replies. In all these accounts the children assumed a central role in the process of elimination, with the final decision often left to them. Few (n=3) families in this category were offered places only at their 'fall-back' options, and consequently appealed to their preferred schools. Two of these appeals were successful.

Unlike the other groups of choosers whose landscapes were narrowed by the features of the 'musical-chairs' market, or the 'retreat' market, the experienced choosers described here were not confined to an inferior secondary marketplace, but playing full-hand in the prime-market, competing for places at 'Mercedes schools' as one parent jokingly titled London's most prestigious, selective schools.

The main difference between this group and the others was in their child-matching practices. Unlike the other groups of choosers who found it difficult to define their children's needs or were concerned with more immediate issues related to their children's adaptation process, or those whose children's talents and academic capacities were hampered by their linguistic skills, thus making it difficult to match the child with a school, the skilled choosers described here were fully engaged in child-matching. These parents inspected and debated various aspects of school – its size, ethos, academic orientation, social mix, travel distance, disciplinary practices, curriculum, etc., in search for a combination of attributes that would promise both the right social mix and the correct balance between academic achievements, cultural and affective aspects of the school's environment. The characteristics of the child were of prime importance in the matching: they defined the child's talents and weaknesses, they analysed the impact of their current schooling on their children's identities, social behaviour, motivation, language skills and academic faculties, and were searching for schools which would be consistent with these particular traits, that would support and further develop the children's strengths, as well as address their weaknesses. Their matching practices also originated from a specific vision of their children's future, in which, for the majority, higher-education was a must. This process was further complicated by their awareness that the merits of schools and the needs of their growing children, were not fixed. Their matching practices often resulted in different choices for different children in the family, and for some children, the attempt to find the 'right school' resulted in multiple and recurrent transitions. At the centre of these discussions were the parents' standpoints as to their immigration and settlement plans, the children's developing sense of identity and the parents' aspirations with regard to these identities. Here we begin to see the ways in which parents examine and consider the impact of schooling in British schools on their children's identities.

In the sections that follow I shall detail their choice process in an attempt to examine how their assimilative stance and identities affected their choice process, and how, in turn, the schooling process had influenced their children's identities. At the center of this analysis, stands (yet again) the ethnic community

and its grapevines, and much of the analysis here will focus on its culture and socialising power.

Embedded wisdom

Earlier I claimed that the most noticeable finding in this study was the weight of the choosers' networks in the choice process. This was undeniably a central feature in the competent veterans' choice process. The comparative analysis between the embedded and the detached choosers offered intriguing findings that shed light on the characteristics of ethnic communities, their gains, their roles, the power they may have over their members' lives, and also, the repercussions when the community is absent.

The analysis of the veteran choosers' networking practices revealed that like their newcomer peers, the embedded veteran parents relied mainly on their Israeli acquaintances as they gathered information about the schools, although they had access to other informal sources of information in their immediate settings:

> *Liora: Now that you ask, I realise that I got most of the information about these schools from Israelis. I did discuss it with the mothers at Newquay, but it was Gila's friend who provided the most essential information on High-Plains (Interview no. 10).*

However, while the newcomers' network was mainly accessed through the schools, the veteran families often approached a much wider web of ties, utilising their own knowledge of the community to activate weak and distant ties. Similar to other groups of choosers, most of their informants were women. Further analysis of their networking patterns illustrated that the veteran choosers were often both on the receiving as well the giving side of the relationship. As they searched for information, they often contacted friends, friends of friends, colleagues and educational professionals, and approached other veteran experienced parents whose older children attended the schools in question. In these occasions much of the interaction involved information exchange rather than one-way information flow. The findings indicate that because of the veterans' central positioning and years of accumulated

knowledge of the community and its members, the ties in operation were, according to Granovetter's (1973) definition, either strong ties, or weak but durable and long-lasting, and these were less dependent or related to the respondents' children ties, as was the case among newcomers.

In the following sections I shall address the information gathering practices among embedded choosers in this category, by presenting three themes that emerged from the data: the first, looks at the choosers' '**embedded knowledge'**, that which emanated from their positioning in the ethnic community. The second theme centers on the veterans' **reaction to the ethnic grapevine,** and the third addresses the **formal information** they obtained and looks at their tactics and views of the market 'PR machine' as one parent called it.

One of the salient findings in this study was the ways in which veteran choosers treated information and utilised it throughout the choice process. Although nearly half of them were choosing secondary schools or sixth-form colleges for the first time since they arrived to London, they were not typical first time choosers in the informational sense. At the beginning of the process many of them had detailed and specific knowledge about some of the schools, particularly communal schools, that outweighed (in their view) any type of formal information. This information was gleaned from their networks and slowly accumulated over the years:

> *Ruth: I knew everything about it – I knew about the transportation issues, I knew about the incidents where children were bullied outside the schools, I knew that the relationships between the Israeli children and the Jewish were not good, and that the Israelis were very cliquey, I knew that the Israeli parents were displeased with the Hebrew studies, and that some were sending their children to do the Hebrew GCSE at the Sunday school. I also went every year to the Yom Hazicaron memorial service so I knew where it was and how horrible the building was. So nothing could surprise me, I already heard every bad thing there was to know about it and heard every criticism (Interview no. 13).*

In many social occasions, such as meetings at coffee shops, dinner parties, communal ceremonies, public lectures, parents' meetings, open evenings and

school gate conversations, educational issues in general and communal schools in particular, featured as central topics in the conversations. Details of events, occurrences or incidents that took place in these schools, whether changes of headship, assessment of staff performance, OFSTED results, exam marks (SATs, GCSEs, A-Levels), conflicts, and security issues were often shared and quickly spread among intra-net members:

> *Orli: The Deputy Head left last month after a clash with the new Head.*
> *Limor: Shoshana told me that the parents are not happy with the new Head either. They say she's too religious for the school (Casual conversation no. 412).*

In addition, episodes or events involving the community children – such as bullying incidents, conflicts between children and staff, social ties established or broken, setting results, prizes achieved, tutoring details and exam marks were also equally efficiently disseminated within the community grapevine:

> *Pazit: Did you hear about the incident near Broadwalk?*
> *Iris: Again?*
> *Pazit: This time they didn't just take their mobile phones but really beat them and one of them threw a bottle at Tom.*
> *Iris: Is he OK?*
> *Pazit: He is OK but not back at school yet.*
> *Iris: That is scary. I think I should consider private transportation at least during his first year there (Casual conversation no. 403).*

Through this type of 'hot' knowledge circulated about, the 'under life of the school' (Ball and Vincent 1998) could be unlocked. Ball (2003a) argues that 'the grapevine is a powerful way in which parents can circumvent professional control over information and the resulting selective public presentation, and gain a sense of the life of the school as experienced directly by the students' (p. 381). Through this type of talk schools' reputations were created, disseminated and propagated.

In addition to the schools' features, accounts related to the choice process and its outcomes, such as details of open evenings and parents' meetings, interview experiences, exam topics and questions, length of waiting lists and who was on it, schools' selection priorities, details of tutors, and news of rejection and acceptance were quickly disseminated around, especially during the sizzling

choice period:

> *Orli: Did you hear that Dorit's daughter, Alona, got into Riverway?*
> *Limor: Ahha, I heard they succeeded in their appeal (Casual conversation no. 70).*

> *Dalit: Congratulations, I heard you got an acceptance letter from Broadwalk. Rina: News do travel fast in the swamp! Yes, we almost gave up after 3 rejection letters, but we got it yesterday – basically at the last moment (Casual conversation no. 217).*

> *Alona: She's the only child from Parkway that did not get into Broadwalk, and that is very odd because they prioritise kids from Jewish schools, but then we heard that kids from Alton and Meadway (non Jewish schools RH) got in and she's still out (Casual conversation no. 88).*

Some news were passed together with the speakers views, evaluation, comments or critique:

> *Ilana: I heard that Lily transferred her son back to Parkway.*
> *Miri: Yes I heard that too, he was very unhappy there.*
> *Ilana: But he wasn't happy at Parkway either, that is why he left in the first place. I think she's too quick to move him around. You don't move a child from one school to the next every time he has a little conflict. What is the message that she's giving him – when things get bad – just walk out?? (Casual conversation no. 79).*

Evidently, this group of choosers started its own choice process on a different knowledge plane than that of the less experienced groups: the majority have had in-depth information about communal schools, long before they engaged with the education market themselves. Their level of knowledge can be attributed to their central positioning in the grapevine and their lengthy on-going engagement with it.

Furthermore, both devotees and non-conformists considered non-communal schools. Although the knowledge among community members regarding non-communal schools was less extensive and less detailed than that circulated on communal schools, surprisingly, much of the information on these schools also originated from the ethnic grapevine with little information gleaned from other sources:

> *Orna: Shula sent her daughter to High Plains so she recommended it to me... and, who told me about Ace? Maybe it was also Shula or perhaps*

Gali? I think they both said I should go and see it and told me about their excellent music department, which was basically what I was looking for (Casual conversation no. 259).

Here the veteran's positioning in the grapevine, that is, their profound acquaintance with the community and their embeddedness was of prime importance. It enabled them to seek information that was not readily accessible to all and spread-out their networking practices, in search of 'weak ties' beyond their children's dense school-based intra-net, who could provide information on less known non-communal schools. Nevertheless, similar to other choosers their landscapes of choice, wide as they may have been, were ultimately defined and circumscribed by their co-nationals. This may be perceived as a contradictory finding, as even those who decided 'to break the herd pattern', most of which had access to other sources of information, formal and informal outside the ethnic grapevine, and indeed conversed and discussed schooling issue with non-Israelis, still preferred to glean information about these less familiar schools from their ethnic networks. Ball (2003a) argues that despite the aura of individuality and autonomy attached to the choice process, the judgements and perceptions of choosers, and as seen here, the initial definition of their landscapes of choice, are collective, and seem to be embedded in a 'shared construction of reality' (Cornell and Hartmann 1988) and 'carried by the communal practices of one's immediate group' (Ball 2003a: 63).

Here the strategies applied by veterans that channelled the less experienced choosers into communal schools, returned full cycle to demarcate their own schooling horizons, limiting from the start their options to schools that were approved by 'people like us'.

Albeit the atmosphere trust and dependability that these actions may radiate, their views of their informal sources were not always positive. Details next.

The swamp: rocking the boat

Although nearly all embedded interviewees in this category admitted that most of the information they acquired derived from the ethnic grapevine, their responses to the community networks and the information circulated within it were not always positive. This was in striking contrast to the responses of the two other categories of choosers, whose main pitch was that of dependability, gratitude and trustworthiness. Similar to Ball and Vincent's (1998) findings, this suggests that choosers that tend to perceive grapevine knowledge as reliable and trustworthy are often the less skilled and less confident, while the skilled and experienced choosers tend to display a more critical and doubtful attitude.

The most obvious negative note on the ethnic grapevine came to light in the title it was given by veterans – The Swamp. This title alluded to the network's tightness, tiny size and the resulting lack of privacy. A common complaint among veterans was: 'everybody here knows what's going on in everybody else's underwear', which demonstrated its lack of discretion and personal space. Some felt that their exposure to gossip was too high: 'enough with the gossip!'; 'they have nothing better to do but to crush others around'; 'it's a stinky swamp'. Others noted on the recycling of information: 'I already heard that story so many times!'; 'this story gets more and more extreme by the version'. These notes may indicate of 'network fatigue', which may occur from over-exposure to network gossip with its gruelling practices, from 'information overload' where too many unessential details are being offered, and from 'information saturation' resulting from recycled information. However, it must be remembered that those who voiced these remarks were often the ones generating the 'informational commotion' they complained about: as shown in the previous chapters, these veterans were placed at the core of the communal web, often acting as 'junctions of information', disseminating information around as they aided the less experienced families.

A second type of response to grapevine knowledge, which was particular to the school choice process, was reservation and individuation. Underlying this

response was the notion that grapevine information was too personal, and because no two children were alike - it would be difficult to infer from one child's personal experience in a particular school at a particular time to other children:

> *Ruth: I don't think I can take her daughter as an example, she's such a tidy and conscientious young girl – I think my son needs much more discipline than she does, he would do much better in a smaller school, with smaller classes, with more personal attention (Casual conversation no. 56).*

As seen here, this type of reserved response to network knowledge was often intertwined with child-matching practices. The common denominator that made grapevine schooling information relevant to all community children among the less experienced choosers – their relative newness, their adaptation process and language difficulties - were no longer of relevance to this group of veteran choosers and their children, and parents thus concentrated on other characteristics of their children and screened information accordingly.

In contrast to other groups of choosers, who were rarely exposed to conflicting views on schools, this group who has seen several cohorts of children going through communal schools, has indeed heard conflicting opinions that existed among community members with regard to communal schools:

> *Rita: It is not true that everybody likes Broadwalk – I heard that Lily's daughter left the school, and that she was very unhappy there (Casual conversation no. 41).*
>
> *Talli: They took both girls out of Parkway, without even waiting until the end of the year (Casual conversation no. 132).*

This has made network information less consistent and thus less reliable in their eyes.

A recurring response to grapevine knowledge was information weeding and assessment: this occurred when veterans 'weed the excess from the essence' of the information they were offered, thereby accepting and making use of some information while discarding other parts of it:

Tali: She said she wasn't happy with the Hebrew studies there. I accept it's not up to the level we expect, but I don't think it's the teacher's fault, I know her, she's a very devoted person. I think it's the school's policy (Casual conversation no. 122).

Their in-depth acquaintance with community members enabled them to distinguish between information sources that were considered reliable and others who were considered untrustworthy:

Dalia: She tends to exaggerate everything. She said her son was bullied, and it turned out he had a clash with one child that he harassed first. Anyway, whatever she tells you is either a fairy-tale or a nightmare, so you cannot take what she says at face value (Casual conversation no. 87).

One of the most thorny and defiant reactions to the grapevine, its informational tactics and resulting influence on members' actions, was the awareness and acknowledgement of its power and authority that resulted in a common educational path, and the urge to rebel against it:

Keren: I had enough of the herd pattern, isn't it time we broke it?? (Casual conversation no. 127).

Margalit: I didn't want to send my son where all the pack went (Interview no. 23).

The last type of response to the grapevine and the information circulated among its members, and the most common one, was similar to that voiced by other groups of choosers – that of trust and dependability of these sources, the reliability of the information provided and its relevance to members of the community. Here it was voiced together with an 'us and them' pitch:

Nira: Every conversation I have with Israelis is much more relevant, more attached to my life. They will never understand what we are going through and how we think. They cannot possibly understand how difficult it is to raise an English child in an Israeli home, how difficult it is to raise a bilingual child, how strange things seem to us, how it feels to raise your child in an environment you will never be really attached to. Only ***we*** *can understand that! (Interview no. 18).*

Hence, despite the criticism and doubt shown above, the views of 'others who are like us', 'who share our experiences' and thus 'understand us', were highly valued, and community members were perceived as sharing distinctive experiences that set them apart from others. This may explain why although all

veterans had access to and indeed discussed school choice issues with others outside their ethnic circle, they preferred and consequently relied on their compatriots as their main source of information.

The diverse responses shown here to the ethnic grapevine and the information circulated through its webs of ties, demonstrates the veteran choosers' level of embeddedness, and the strength of their positioning in the network: evidently, these parents were able to 'rock the boat', yet still remain on it, that is, they censured, devaluated and criticised grapevine practices, while retaining their central positioning in it and their prime roles as information brokers:

> *Adam: Today, I'm doing the same services to newcomers. I owe this tendency to these friends of mine who were so helpful, as if I'm following a tradition 'as my ancestors helped me, so will I help my decedents' (Interview no. 1).*
>
> *Gila: I am very involved, I know everybody here, even those not worth knowing (Casual conversation no. 71).*

The inconsistency highlighted here between their central positioning and their critical views of the communal grapevine which may be typical in positions of power and authority, begs the question as to why they continue to shoulder these roles? Moreover, why do they continue to direct their newly arrived peers into communal schools? The key to these questions lies in the power and status accumulated through the usage of social capital (Burt 2000; Faist 2000): Faist (2000) argues, that the mere practice and utilisation of social capital enables its enhancement and expansion, as well as the accumulation of power and control. As seen in the previous chapters, this group shouldered a variety of supportive roles and thus assumed an influential position among their peers as 'the knowledgeable and experienced helpers'. Their excessive engagement with the network, their continuous investment and supportive stance placed them centrally on the communal web and rendered them their powerful positions. These pivotal and influential positions and the admiration, trust and gratitude attached to them, motivated them to continue to shoulder these roles. This may also explain their gate-keeping functions: in order to retain one's rank in an organisation, that formation, as informal as it may be, has to survive. As

described earlier, communal schools functioned as gateways to the community and as ethnic organisations, and therefore their continued function was essential for the survival of the community. Thus, the veterans' 'acts of closure', of 'gathering the herd', could be interpreted as simple actions of network preservation. However, being experienced and central as they were, may also explain their capacity to 'rock the boat' not only with regard to their critical stance towards network knowledge, but also as they 'deviate from the herd pattern' that they themselves help generate and opt for non-communal schools.

Consumerist rituals

The comparison between the three categories of choosers demonstrates the intricate interaction between knowledge and information: while the international choosers' lack of knowledge hampered their capacities to access and assimilate new information, the newcomers were able to access information but unable to decode it. The veterans group had access to formal information, as well as having the capacity to decode it, yet, here again, the correlation between access to formal information and its utilisation was not always high nor positive, mainly due to the interviewees' preliminary level of informal knowledge, which made much of the formal information they obtained redundant.

Albeit their relatively high level of knowledge at the start of the choice process, the majority of the parents in this category were 'alert' (Willms and Echols 1992) and proactive choosers, where formal information was concerned and most have accumulated a wide range of information from formal sources. All of the parents obtained the LEA's handbook as well as those of adjacent LEAs, and 4-7 prospectuses of schools along with other registration paperwork. In addition, most had at their disposal schools' newsletters, adverts and articles published in local or national newspapers, guidebooks, lists of open evening dates, examination result league tables as well as copies of OFSTED reports. Many surfed the schools' websites as well as the DfES website, and the majority obtained examination exercise packs from local bookshops. All families attended 3-7 open evenings, as well as several parents' evenings at their

current schools, and most had conversations with head teachers or teachers at their children's current schools or at the prospective schools.

Their reports suggest that these parents had strong consumerist inclinations, yet surprisingly, most of them revealed negative views of the education market and the choice policy generally:

> *Ben: The result of all this 'choice' are all those schools that no one wants to go to, yet they cannot close them down because there is no-where to sent the kids to (Interview no. 2).*
>
> *Renni: I will always remember how badly it went when we came – Danit was schoolless for 2 weeks – if that could happen – it tells me that the whole system, well, it doesn't work does it? (Interview no. 7).*
>
> *Ben: I prefer the catchment area system. Definitely. After seeing how it works here – my mind is even stronger (Interview no. 2).*
>
> *Liora: If the child gets rejected from a school – it doesn't matter how you will present it to him – he will always feel awful about it and start in his new school on the left foot (Interview no. 10).*

It may be suggested that their strong proclivity to participate in the market was more out of necessity rather than free will. Their critical standpoint towards the choice policy, together with their high level of preliminary knowledge, which was gleaned from their network, may explain their sceptic perceptions of the formal information they obtained:

> *Adam: League tables? I'm not really impressed with the whole idea. These tests - it's like doing a competition between runners - but checking only their finishing time. I mean you can't really compare schools - the profile of the 50% of students who do finish the A levels in Boxhill- is the same as 100% of students who attend High Plains, so Boxhill actually has 100% success with the ones who are able (Interview no. 1).*

This parent questioned the appropriateness of examination results as a measure of the value of schools. Although exam results did play a part in weighing up schools in most families, they were rarely used as an overriding consideration. Further, these parents were aware that the schools could manipulate exam results:

Miri: Some schools do not let their 'weak' children take the GCSEs. All they care about is looking good on the league tables (Interview no. 8).

In the next quotes the schools' handbooks were devalued and dismissed:

Ben: What do you expect schools to write in these brochures?? That they have drugs and bullying problems? I didn't even bother to read this stuff (Interview no. 2).

Liora: I read the prospectuses, they are very informative, about things like curriculum, extra-curricular activities and such, but all the rest - it's just public relations (Interview no.10).

The parent quoted below, a sales manager, criticised the orchestrated nature of open evenings:

Eran: What can you learn from those open evenings really? It's not the way the school really runs even by the basic fact that it is in the evening and only few of the kids and the teachers are there. They know they are putting a show for you, and you know it's a sales exhibition, like the ones I do. The only thing you can learn from it is how good they are in putting a sales show. And you know what, I am not sure that the school that can put the best show – is the best school. I know how time consuming this PR work can be – so a school that devotes so much attention to that show – it tells me that its priorities are all wrong (Casual conversation no. 334).

Typical of middle-class choosers, who seem to be the favoured target audience for the schools' public-relations apparatus (Maguire, Ball and Macrae 1999), these choosers manifested criticism and doubt about the attempts at impression management involved in the production of the schools' handbooks and the choreographing of open evenings, and felt that 'market systems produce a particular genre of communication which is not to be trusted' (Ball 2003a: 152).

While the international choosers were unable to access this type of information, and the newcomers showed signs of information overload and were unable to extract the essential material from the 'excess', these competent veteran choosers accessed this type of information fairly easily, and displayed an ability to process, assess and discriminate the essential data from what they perceived as 'promotional' material. Their capacity to 'decipher' the transmissions of the market may be attributed to their high level of preliminary knowledge, which was obtained through their ethnic grapevine.

The findings thus suggest that the parents in this category accessed and utilised grapevine knowledge available to them as well as information offered through formal sources, yet, they were often critical and dismissive of both types. In the next quote the mother voiced her feelings that schools' environments may not be accessible to anyone else but the pupils in the school:

> *Aviva: You cannot really tell how good a school is until you send your child there, and even then, how can you tell? It's only when the child cries Gevald (Help! in Yiddish RH) that you can tell that something is wrong (Casual conversation no. 25).*

However, being young and inexperienced, the 'insider's perception' of children could not always be trusted:

> *Daniella: He was happy there – but what does he know?? He didn't have anything to compare it with. It's only when he went to Freeway that he realised that schooling could be different, a much better experience (Casual conversation no. 322).*

Albeit their dismissive views of the market 'PR machine', most parents felt obliged to participate and utilise their market skills in order to maximise their children's educational possibilities. Ball (2003a) maintains that this commitment to participate may be seen as part of the culture of 'good parenting' that is typical of middle-class families (Bourdieu 1986a). It is a culture of 'performativity'; doing what a conscientious, dependable parent should be doing, and of 'hyper responsibility' where 'responsibly must be played out, taken seriously' (Ball 2003a: 157). Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball (1994) argue that the consumerist discourses of the educational market seem to tap into this culture by equating the image of the 'responsible parent' with the 'informed consumer', and by pathologising those who fail to assume their responsibilities as 'bad parents'. Moreover, as the next quote demonstrates, some parents felt there were risks involved in the market, risks that demanded their full attention and involvement:

> *Ronit: Where we lived (in Israel) it didn't matter which junior high school you went to because they were all fine, but here your choice is critical. Some schools are so bad, you can just end up in a dead end...(Casual conversation no. 198).*

The dangers of carelessness or sloppy choice process and of choosing the

'wrong school' appear to be very real. Here the parent gives an indication of her anxiety that long-term educational goals may be obstructed by the 'wrong choice' at an earlier point. This remark was in contrast to the trust in the system that international choosers conveyed upon arrival and their initial assumption that education in Britain was generally of good standard and not an issue of concern. Evidently, the veterans' heightened knowledge demoted their early naivety. The sense of risk reported here, which may be 'low probability' but 'high consequence' (Ball 2003b: 160) was, for some parents, the driving force behind their strong inclination to participate in the market: the sense of hazard and responsibility seemed to be fused here to prompt market action (Vincent and Martin 2002; Beck 1992).

There are three points to be made in conclusion. Firstly, it was clear from the parents' reports on the formal information they obtained, that their language and discursive skills were no longer an obstacle to their participation in the educational market, and that unlike the newcomer choosers, these veteran parents were able to decipher formal information, as well as make sense and 'read between the lines' of the written or verbal communication offered to them. However, their decoding capacities, in combination with the high level of informal knowledge accumulated through their extensive involvement in the ethnic grapevine, rendered these choosers fairly sceptical about formal sources of information. Secondly, although this group was no longer dependent on their co-nationals for the retrieval or interpretation of formal information, similar to their less-skilled colleagues, they relied heavily on the ethnic grapevine both for the accumulation of knowledge on schools as well as the delineation of their landscapes of choice, and this was found among both subgroups. Nevertheless, they were critical and dismissive of grapevine information, much of which they themselves were generating and circulating. Thirdly, while voicing strong criticism towards the sources of information available to them as well as the choice policy in general, they were highly involved, alert and proactive choosers. Their market activity emanated from their middle-class 'good parenting' culture and their awareness of the risks embedded in the market mechanism.

Their 'drive to perform' as parents and educational consumers will be further explored next.

Market tactics

The analysis of the choice process among this group highlighted several points where the parents applied 'market tactics' in order to strengthen their positioning as consumers in the educational marketplace. Their strategies displayed the relatively sophisticated market skills that were characteristic of these families, which were in contrast to their less-experienced co-nationals. In what follows I shall depict six common market strategies reported on by these families. It should be noted, however, that although almost all families reported on at least one type of tactics applied, none of the families applied all six.

1. **Selectivity training**: the most common market strategy deployed by these families, was the employment of tutors, often for many months, in preparation for entry exams:

   Sharon: We have a tutor now, for almost a year, she's preparing her for the entry exams (Casual conversation no. 144).

Tutors often assisted these families not only with preparation for entry exams but also by assessing the child's aptitude in different subjects, by coaching all family members for interviews, by helping parents to fill forms, write letters or prepare for appeals, and by offering advice as to the child's achievement portfolio. In many ways, tutors employed by these families were regarded as experts in market tactics (Ball 2003b) and were expected to provide a particular kind of preparation for the type of competition that selective schools engender, by sharing their 'inside' knowledge and by assessing the children's aptitude and advising on their chances of successful application. Ball (2003a) maintains that tutors could be utilised as a 'scaffolding' in these situations, but may also act as gatekeepers or legitimators by enabling their pupils' access to these prestigious schools. Accordingly, tutors were the one source of information that this group of

choosers did not discard, however, most of the information provided by tutors was on the entry procedures rather than on specific schools.

2. **Tactical choosing**: most families in this category applied this tactic in order to tackle the saturated market conditions they faced, and to ensure their children 'will be the ones making the choice' at the end of the process. Much of the tactical choosing reported on by devotees was similar to the type deployed by newcomer choosers, and was mainly conducted in an attempt to gain entry to communal schools, most of which were oversubscribed. Thus, the majority of devotees applied to one or two communal schools and to few private or LEA schools as fallback options, in order to obtain a place in an acceptable alternative in case their application was unsuccessful. The non-conformists' tactical choosing, on the other hand, was closer to that applied by middle-class choosers and described by Ball (1997) as having 'in play a combination of choices made to a range of state and private schools. One or more state schools will be chosen as *fallback*, as least worst alternatives, if entry to or financial support for private schooling proves impossible' (p. 10). However, unlike Ball's choosers who targeted particularly private selective schools, here the goal was selective, high-achieving schools, some of which were independent and others were state-maintained, and their fall-back options, were often communal schools. In a sense then, both sub-groups applied to a similar pool of schools but their order of preference were different.

3. **Maximising possibilities, minimising eliminations**: this was an extension of the tactical choosing described above and was applied by few families. This strategy involved applying to 'as many schools as possible' in order to 'secure a position of chooser' at the end of the process, which meant that between the starting point and the application stage barely any schools were eliminated from the list. One family applied to seven schools, with the child having to sit exams in five. All schools applied to were considered reasonable but only one or two were desirable. This process

has led to the deferral of the decision moment to the point where schools' responses were received.

4. **Monetary bids:** this refers to the ways in which parents made use of their financial assets to gain a more secured position in the educational arena. Among this group of choosers economic resources were used in a variety of ways; the most evident was the willingness 'to buy into' the private schooling market and employ tutors. A few families who were moving houses at the time were thinking of buying or renting a house in close proximity to their desired schools, and a few, in fact, did. However, the most blunt way of 'buying a place' as one parent termed it, was by giving donations to the schools:

> *Sari: They asked us in the interview if we could afford the voluntary contribution, so we said that we'd be happy to contribute more... (Casual conversation no. 357).*
>
> *Ron: They produce a glossy school calendar every year, so I bought adverts for a few years (Casual conversation no. 269).*
>
> *Iris: We gave them a huge donation for their new sports hall (Interview no. 30).*

Indeed, material resources can be seen to strengthen the families' desirability from the schools' perspectives, thereby enhancing their positioning as consumers in the education marketplace.

5. **Calculated transitions:** this type of strategy involved transferring the child to a primary school that was considered a 'feeder school' for the desired secondary school (Noden, West, David and Edge 1998). In the next quotes the destination school was a communal Jewish school that prioritised children coming from Jewish primary schools:

> *Orli: I've decided to transfer Alon (y5) to Pennywell. I want to make sure he gets a place at Broadwalk. They prioritise children from Jewish schools.*
> *Miri: But is it worth it? It's an hour drive each way (Casual conversation no. 289).*

Haggit: I'm going to register Karen to Freeway and Pennywel for next year (y6). They offered her a place at Meadway, but I want to ensure that she gets a place at Broadwalk so I have got to have her in a Jewish primary school. After all the hassle I had with Sean (who didn't get a place at Broadwalk, went to Bridgway, and left after a year to a tutorial college RH) I want to make sure she gets in.
Alona: You are not likely to get a place at Freeway, but Pennywell, I heard they have spare places. But isn't it too religious for you?
Haggit: Yes, and the transportation is also going to cost me a fortune – but if she does get in – Sean would be able to get a place as a sibling at least in year 12 (Casual conversation no. 148).

Here the calculated transition is meant to enable both children in the family to gain access to a desired school, by utilising the other priority criteria applied by the school: siblings. Below, the parent decided to transfer her children to a more academic school, which was considered to have long standing links with the desired secondary school:

> *Orna: I wanted a more academically challenging environment for them, and the Head said that (at Meadway) most of the girls sat exams for High Plains, and many got in, so that gave me an indication of how good they were. But also, at Alton almost no-one considered High Plains and I felt it was important for her to be in an environment where that type of secondary school was the sort of thing that everybody saw as the normal continuation (Interview no. 11).*

Although these types of calculated transitions were not a wide spread phenomenon, their occurrence among this group of choosers demonstrates their capacity to take advantage of the market regulations and practices in order to ensure access to their favoured schools.

6. **Psychological empowerment**: the last type of tactic was directed at the children, in an attempt to ease the stress involved in competition, that is, sitting exams and preparing for other selection procedures, and in an attempt to minimise the psychological damage of failure and rejection, if that occurred. Few mothers in this group reported of their attempt in making a highly academic school and the one most valued by the parents, seem less desired, or less favoured, in their children's eyes, in order to make the competition seem less crucial:

Liora: I told her 'take the exams just to get a practice'. I didn't want her to get her hopes too high and then if she doesn't get in to have to deal with a disheartened child. She went to the first round – and succeeded, so I said 'well, what have you got to lose, try the second round and see'. At that point she already knew she had a place at Tollerpath, and she thought that's where she would go, so she treated it like a game in a way, which was exactly how I wanted her to take it. But when she got in – she was very proud and didn't even consider the possibility of not going there (Interview no. 10).

Dalia: I presented it to him as our third choice with Tollerpath being first on our list, so he went to the exams and when he didn't get in we said to him – well, never mind, we never really wanted you to go there (Casual conversation no. 289).

These parents were well aware of the effects of competition and possible rejection on their children's psychological state, and applied this strategy to shelter their children from a type of unpleasant occurrence, that is embedded in the market structure and therefore difficult to avoid.

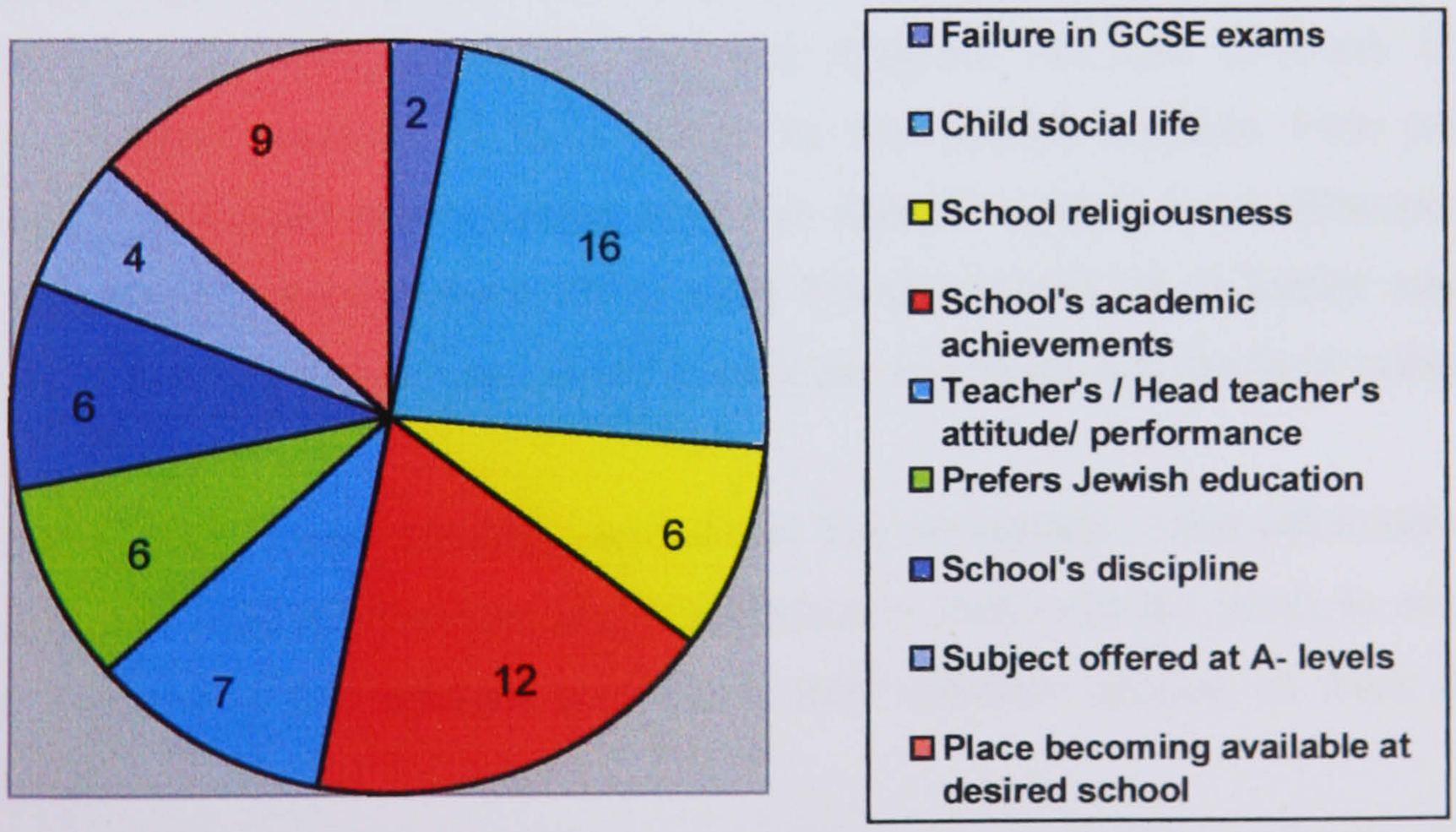
The market tactics delineated here are indicative of the parents' strong inclination to take part in the competitive arena and gives a sense of their capacities as educational consumers and relative skillfulness. It also underscores their sense of risk which may be amplified by the fuzziness and open-endedness of the market, which urged them to become more skillful and more involved in the process in order to minimise the risks and secure their children's educational future. The application of these tactics may give them a sense of control, which corresponded with their sense of responsibility (Ball 2003b).

At the same time, these parents acquired and indeed applied another tactic that enabled them to utilise market regulations to their advantage: **voluntary transitions**. In fact, this group of choosers had the largest number of voluntary transitions in comparison to all other categories of choosers. An analysis of the reasons behind the 'voluntary transfers' (t=45 voluntary transfers, and n=68 number of parents stating each reason) (see figure 9) revealed that in most cases there were several reasons and factors driving parents to initiate

transfers between schools. Evidently, all transfers were initiated out of parents' or children's dissatisfaction with the schools they attended.

The most common factor leading to such transfers was the child's social life. The parents reported that the lack of friendship ties with classmates, lack of Israeli friends, child being lonely, ignored, ridiculed, feeling as an outsider or in few cases being bullied by schoolmates, pushed parents to search for a different school. The parents whose children experienced social problems often approached teachers or head-teachers in an attempt to resolve the problem, before initiating such transfers. When schools did not respond as the parents expected, some parents added this as further reason to leave the school. These were marked in the figure below as 'teacher's or head's attitude/ performance'.

Figure 9: Reasons for voluntary transfers between schools



N= no. of parents citing each reason.

The second factor stated as a major reason for transfer was the parents' unhappiness with the school's academic achievements or more generally with its 'academic environment'. This was defined by interviewees as lack of orderliness or discipline, outdated teaching methods or curriculum, unskilled or

uninterested staff, lack of support, motivation, enthusiasm or generally low 'drive to achieve', and in some cases, the high proportion of 'problem' children, who may 'pull the school's performance down'.

This type of academic reasoning was often intertwined with two other incentives: the desire to give the child a Jewish education, and the opportunity to transfer the child to a desired school when places became available. Those who transferred their children from a non-Jewish to a Jewish school stated a desire for Jewish education, but often chose these schools not only for their Jewishness, but also because they were seen to offer a more academic and challenging educational environment than that of the current school. However, similar to other high achieving schools, Jewish schools were often oversubscribed, and thus voluntary transitions to these schools often occurred when places became available.

The children whose parents initiated transfers between schools because of 'school religiousness', were mostly secular parents whose children attended a Jewish school which, they felt, was 'too religious' for their children. Most of these children transferred from Jewish to non-Jewish schools. Few orthodox parents transferred their children between Jewish schools in an attempt to find an educational environment which they thought would be 'a better match' in terms of the school and the family's religious practices and general orientation.

As seen here, these families possessed the resources – the information, the finance, as well as the time and confidence – that enabled them to negotiate and manipulate the system and move their children around to their desired schools:

> *Daniella: I'm transferring her to another school. She's so unhappy there. If we were in Israel we probably would not have a choice, unless we moved to another house, but here – we do have a choice, so why not take advantage of it (casual conversation no. 412).*

It should be noted here that there is barely any evidence in the literature of this type of market exploitation, since most school choice studies focus on

compulsory school transfers. However, the potential ability of parents to 'vote with their feet' at any point in their children's educational career seems to have an impact on both the schools and the parents (Adler and Raab 1988; Crozier 2000). Some parents who found themselves in situations of discord with the schools – whether civil disagreements over educational issues, or voice-raising, ground-breaking conflicts, commented that instead of 'discussing it with the school', 'arguing with them' or 'fighting over it' they simply searched for a different school. Others said that they left the school unwillingly over issues that in their homeland's catchment area system they would have had to find ways to resolve, since the possibility of exit does not exist. Moreover, there were parents who noted that they were politely (and sometimes less courteously) 'directed out of the school', and that at the point of collision, the schools displayed a marked unwillingness to engage with them or with the quandaries they presented, and 'found the easier way out' by 'getting rid of us'. These accounts suggest that the possibility of exit may be exploited both by schools and parents. More importantly, the possibility of exit may engender a culture of superficial and uncommitted relations between families and schools, where 'problem children' could be transferred around the system, with no school requiring to commit to engage long-term or in-depth with them or with the issues they present.

This section described the market tactics applied by the embedded competent veteran parents in their attempts to gain access to their desired schools - whether these were communal or prestigious high-performing non-communal schools. The findings presented here suggest that these choosers no longer occupied a vulnerable market position as did their less experienced peers, since their adaptation process has brought them to a point where they could participate in the market with knowledge of the 'rules of the game' as well as strong aptitude and willingness to operate the market mechanisms to their advantage.

Comparative intermission: on detachment

In comparing the narratives of embedded and detached choosers, four areas of variation came into view: firstly, the embedded choosers' reports were literally absorbed within the grapevine knowledge, with the charts of their information flows demonstrating an intricate information artery, in which they were positioned at its central junction. In contrast, the detached choosers had access to fewer informants and began their search with a lower level of initial knowledge. Secondly, the embedded choosers were conducting their choice process as part of a collective mind, which circumscribed their horizons for action, while the detached handled it as an individual project within which their child-matching practices dominated the scene. Thirdly, both groups were middle-class and highly skilled choosers and this was the one area of similarity between them, nevertheless, their choice process and considerations were different, and it seems that the existence / absence of the community networks in their lives may explain these differences. The fourth area of divergence between the groups' relates to their narratives in terms their contents and complexity. The comparison between them indicated that the reports articulated by detached choosers were usually shorter and less comprehensive than the narratives articulated by embedded choosers. However, it must be born in mind that most detached choosers were intermarried couples and thus the Israeli interviewee was often the parent who was less involved in the choice process. Further, the only available data on detached choosers were their interviews since no data was collected by means of observation, and thus, relatively, their narratives lacked much of the richness of the embedded choosers' reports, which were also taken from on-the-spot observations.

Unlike the embedded choosers, most of the detached 'started thinking about the issue of schooling' about three or four years prior to the transition, and thus often began their choice process already knowing in advance which schools they sought:

> *Einat: It was clear from the start where she would be going, it was either Ace or New Springs where his sisters went and where his nieces were going (Interview no. 38).*

Similar to the embedded, most already had fair amounts of informal knowledge in their possession, especially on schools their partners and other family members attended:

> *Yael: My partner grew up in this area so he was familiar with the schools (Interview no. 54).*
>
> *Yael: His sister helped out – she's teaching in one of the secondary schools here, so she went with us to some of the open evenings and was very helpful with information (Interview no. 54).*

These families obtained information from several non-Israeli resources, most of which were part of their closest circle of acquaintances. Further, many of them obtained information from the parents' networks accessed through their children's current school:

> *Nava: We spoke to the parents who we knew from the school, there were so many meetings that year and so we got a bit closer to them (Interview no. 57).*

The main structural differences between the networks accessed by detached and embedded choosers was in the number of networks approached, how they accessed these networks, the strength of the ties involved, and the density of the networks into which they were tapping. The detached families often accessed several networks, which seem to be unconnected, such as: friends, colleagues at work, neighbours, family and friends of family members, as well as acquaintances from the synagogue, the child's afternoon classes, or the parent's leisure activities. Most of these ties were not approached purposefully with the aim of gleaning information, but they were indeed addressed when the opportunity presented itself. These networks were made of both strong and weak ties and supplied reasonable amounts of information, which these parents assessed as 'helpful' in making the decision. Evidently, the title 'detached' may not be entirely appropriate here since these families were not isolated socially and had at their disposal an abundance of social capital to draw on as they searched for schooling information.

In contrast to the ethnic grapevine with whom the embedded choosers engaged, with its dense social ties and information recycling tendencies that

seemed to produce a specific 'pool of schools' on which information was circulated, the detached choosers initial landscape of choice was much wider as each network provided information on different schools, however, they often ended with fewer schools on their lists and tended to arbitrarily discard schools they could have approached. Further, while the ethnic grapevine shouldered some of the decision making process by confining the parents' thinking to the communally approved schools, the detached parents conducted the process with no such sense of direction.

About a year prior to the registration date the search for formal information began. Similar to locally born middle-class choosers, most of these families focused on private prestigious and selective schools which appeared to be 'the obvious course' (Ball 2003b: 55) for them and often seen as a 'traditional route' in their locally born spouses' families. In terms of geographical distance most families confined themselves to schools requiring no more than an hour's drive from the family's home. With few exceptions, most families obtained formal information about 3-4 secondary schools or colleges and applied to these schools. Their views on the formal information they retrieved, which were often sceptical and dismissive, were fairly similar to those voiced by embedded choosers, yet they too, were proactive choosers and often went to see schools, 'so that he (the child) could see it'.

Unlike the embedded who collated a primary list of schools on which information would be collected, and then eliminated schools for various reasons, the majority of the detached began with a relatively shorter list of schools and applied to all. Families who were choosing a school for a younger child often applied only to the school his older sibling attended and barely collected any information on other schools. Most families applied to one or two desired schools while adding to their lists one or two 'fall-back' options. These were either the local (but high performing) school or a private school.

The next stage included selection procedures and similar to the embedded this group applied several market tactics to ensure entry to the desired schools. The

process ended for nearly all of the families in this category, with at least one desired school offering the child a place.

The main difference between the detached and the embedded group was in their child matching practices. Although both groups were fully engaged in child matching, inspected and debated various aspects of school in relation to the child's talents and needs, and while both worked from a specific vision of their children's future, in which higher-education was 'the expected route', unlike the embedded, the detached did not voice solid opinions with regards to their children's identities national or Jewish, and their standpoints as to their immigration and settlement plans were irrelevant to the choice process. However, their middle-class dispositions and identities took central stage in the process.

The main area of similarity between the embedded and the detached choosers were their skills as choosers: both groups had at their disposal, at the point of decision, comprehensive, highly detailed knowledge on the schools they considered, both had applied various market tactics to work the market to their advantage and both displayed child matching orientated thinking. The main differences between them reappeared as they displayed their considerations for choice, which I shall address later.

Negotiating terrains: between class and ethnicity

The next sections examine the veteran's decision-making process with regards to the schools they addressed themselves to. In what follows I aim to highlight the ways in which the two social positions the choosers occupied – their middle-class status, and their minority ethnic rank, interacted throughout the process, and swayed the parents' decision making in certain directions.

The argument presented here is a constructionist one: it maintains that the veteran choosers described here have developed an ethnic identity, an identity that placed them in a certain position vis-à-vis the educational market, coloured

their visions and their assessment of the schools, and became a starting point for interpretation of their circumstances and the action they have taken (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). The argument goes on to suggest that the respondents' embeddedness in an ethnic community provided them with a third, 'in-between' ethnic culture that constructed a distinct educational assessment system. This evaluation scheme enabled them to blend their middle-class cultural capital with its typical dispositions (Bourdieu 1986a), with their ethnic positioning and minority status. Here the ethnic community's meso level structure transformed into a stable cultural structure affecting their thinking and actions.

Prior to the analysis of their evaluation schemes and considerations, I shall attempt to depict the group's 'opportunity structures' (Roberts 1993) and 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997) at the point of decision. The findings suggest that despite their high aptitude in market skills, the veterans' horizons for action were somewhat limited. The first point that demonstrated the contraction of their sphere, emerged from their information gathering tactics: as noted earlier, the information about communal as well as non-communal schools applied to was gleaned from the ethnic grapevine, which meant that these schools and their population were 'approved' by community members from the outset. Therefore, the parents deliberations over the issues presented below at the point of decision, were fairly superficial as well as somewhat inconsequential, as schools which may have been perceived as potentially 'incompatible' in terms of their academic performance, social mix or by any other criteria, were not included in the initial demarcation of their landscapes of choice. Here the shared perception and understanding emerging from their ethnic culture, defined and confined the choosers' perspectives. This could be interpreted as a risk management tactic (Giddens 1998; Beck 1992) that directed the choosers, from the outset, to safe and guaranteed educational avenues.

The second point that revealed how these choosers' opportunity structures were tightened by their ethnic lenses, was where the logic and taste ingrained in their middle-class thinking, sat awkwardly with their ethnic status. Where

these cultural incompatibilities occurred, the parents found themselves confined to a tightly circumscribed educational path that enabled them to endorse both. This leads to the defining factor that appeared to guide the families' educational choices: their 'sense of place'. Bourdieu (1986a) suggests that the choosers' assessment schemes function as a sort of social orientation, a sense of one's place, directing the choosers towards a position in the educational marketplace that is in tune with their social positions. Thus the choice here was orientated and informed by class thinking, as well as ethnic reasoning with the parents attempting to find a match between family habitus and school habitus in both senses. The point to be made here, is that social groups, whether class based or ethnic, engage with, perceive, comprehend and assess schools in particular ways, and their visions originate from their culture and its values. This group's thinking originated from an 'in-between' ethnic cultural framework that combined their homeland's, their host's and their middle-class cultural capital in a specific way.

In order to examine the choosers' decision making process I have fragmented the respondents' reports into three types of thinking; **criteria setting:** where parents defined certain criteria through which they assessed the schools. This may be seen as the lens through which these parents perceived the schools that determined what they saw, and also what they ignored or did not see. The second type of thinking was **decoding and assessment:** this was where the features of the schools were analysed, interpreted and graded in accordance with the criteria set. The last type of thinking was **consideration:** in which their child-matching practices occurred as they evaluated the merits of the schools in conjunction with the needs and talents of the child.

In analysing the data on the choosers' criteria, decoding practices and their considerations, a few patterns occurred that seemed to dominate the group's thinking, or were typical of one of the sub-groups; I shall focus here on the two that appeared most frequently in the respondents' accounts: **the academic orientation of the school,** and its **intake.**

Grading schools: the academic aspect

The first, and the most commonly addressed criteria for the assessment of schools, which was at the center of this group's educational considerations and child-matching practices, revolved around the **academic orientation** of the schools. This theme included a range of variables that parents saw as the most significant factors affecting the academic achievements of pupils.

The school's academic spirit was one of the most persistent themes among interviewees, which defined the 'academic ethos' of the school. This was described by parents as 'a sense of ambition', 'high aspiration', 'motivation' or 'enthusiasm for learning', emanating from the school and from the 'children's outlook', their 'ambition' and 'dynamism', with the school expected to provide the 'drive to achieve', 'the push to aim high', 'the encouragement to excel', 'the belief in the children', and a 'competitive environment'. This criterion was of particular importance to these parents, as it matched their self-perceptions as 'ambitious' parents, with 'high aspirations' for their children's future, as well as 'investing', 'motivating' and 'supporting'. Their reports suggest that these parents were looking for a match between their middle-class parenting habitus and that of the school (Ball 2003a).

The academic spirit of the school was perceived by these parents as something engendered by not only be the school and its staff, but also, by the children and their families, which I shall address below. However, while a minority felt they have found their 'right match' in terms of 'academic spirit', others felt that none of the schools they had considered offered that type of 'ambitious' and 'motivating' environment:

Irit: I find all these schools here lack that high achievement spirit, and drive to excel that you see in our schools. And that rubs off on the kids. Our children are much more ambitious and competitive (Casual conversation no. 91).

Tami: I do not believe there is a child in this country who cannot pass the GCSEs. It's all about expectations and their motivation! Why do you think our kids are doing so well? Because we expect that much of them. The kids here are not pushed at all, not encouraged to believe in themselves.

These schools encourage mediocrity (Casual conversation no. 271).

As a result these parents tended to write off this criteria as an element imported from the homeland an as such – irrelevant. In addition, there were few parents who searched for schools with more relaxed, less competitive environments which they felt were more apt for their children:

> *Sarit: The competition in Israel, and the pressure to excel was way too high, and not everyone can take it. Some kids just don't have what it takes (Casual conversation no. 394).*

> *Orna: I like the relaxed non-competitive environment of that school (Casual conversation no. 352).*

Thus, despite the recurrent mention of this criterion, and its centrality in their thinking only few had in practice applied it to reject schools or accept them.

The school's learning environment was mentioned to a lesser degree than the previous criterion. This principle addressed the 'orderliness', 'structure' and the 'organisation' of the school as a learning environment: it mainly referred to the general 'system' by which the school was run, and the 'everyday routines' such as the school's assessment system and its reporting routines, its homework schemes, etc. Unlike the previous criterion which was barely used in the decision making, this was utilised by the parents who mentioned it, and a pattern occurred: the general tendency was to reject rigid academic environments which were perceived as 'too stressful', too 'grade orientated', and 'a grades factory', 'where the child has no life, but study' as well as to eliminate from the list those secondary schools which were perceived as 'too relaxed' or too 'laissez faire', 'too chaotic, even for us', which were perceived as 'lacking' an academic atmosphere. This criterion was often intertwined with the discipline criteria detailed below.

The school's achievements: this measure included features that could give an indication of the school's achievement de-facto. As noted earlier, exam results did play a part in appraising schools, but, they were often used to

eliminate 'bad' schools off the initial list, that is, schools with lower than average exam results were not considered from the outset:

> *Talia: I would not choose a school that is doing below the national average. The national average is quite low as it is, so if a school's grade is below that – I'd say there's a problem there (Casual conversation no. 261).*

However, once the initial list was in hand with schools performing reasonably, the exam results were rarely of paramount importance. On the other hand, OFSTED reports, and the percentage of graduates continuing to prestigious schools or universities, as well as prizes and awards won by the schools, were looked into as an indicator of the school's academic success, while tutoring (that is, rumours indicating that a high percentage of children were tutored) rendered the school's academic results suspicious. The one distinct pattern that emerged suggests that most parents preferred schools that allowed all children, including those achieving low grades, to sit GCSE and A-level exams, acknowledging that exclusionary policies were a way of 'manipulating the league table results' and 'improving the school's position on the league tables'. Thus, reports of children leaving the school were also treated as an indication of a problem. This was a weighty consideration, and some parents discarded schools that were known to 'throw out kids who were doing badly just before the GCSEs' / A-levels'. This may be seen as a risk management tactic, as parents tended to avoid schools whose policies created 'bottle-necks' that might hamper their children's progression.

The school's curriculum (particularly religious education and languages taught, and at A-level – which exams were on offer), was a clear cut criteria that was often used to eliminate schools who could not offer the desired subjects:

> *Rina: No, it doesn't offer DT for A-level. No point (in making a registration) here (Casual conversation no. 77).*

> *Alina: She wants to do Hebrew GCSE and then A-Level, so it's either Broadwalk or Tollerpath, the others (Jewish schools) do not have that on offer (Casual conversation no. 237).*

This may give an indication that if schools were allowed to deviate from the National Curriculum, and develop certain areas as their major expertise in the way that magnet schools in the USA operate (Smerkar and Goldring 1999), the choice of school might have been more subject-orientated.

State and independent schools, comprehensive and grammar: Unlike Ball's (2003a) middle-class choosers who treated state schools in general and comprehensive schools in particular with some doubt and suspicion, and often regarded private schools as their natural route and as a point of reference by which other schools were comparatively assessed, these parents did not convey that sense of obviousness and naturalness in relation to private schools, and did not dismiss state nor comprehensive schools. This general acceptance of the latter may be explained by their own experiences in Israel: most of them were educated in a system that had no private schooling on offer and in which most schools were comprehensive. However, it could be also explained by the 'conflict of habituses' between their middle-class positions, and their ethnic minority status: as I shall demonstrate below, while their middle-class dispositions engendered a 'pull' towards prestigious fee-paying and selective schools, their ethnic status rendered some private schools as 'alien' and 'snobbish', 'too posh', thus limiting their educational horizons. Thus, schools were not dismissed on account of their comprehensiveness and grammar schools were also not blindly chosen for their selectivity:

> *Yael: The school was very impressive, in a sort of 'royal' way, but I felt it was simply too old fashioned, too authoritarian. No. I didn't like it (Casual conversation no. 99).*

> *Ora: Sari told me that when it came to the GCSEs the school was a bit too laid back, sort of counting on these crème-de-la-crème girls to do well with or without them (Casual conversation no. 112).*

Nevertheless, similar to local middle-class choosers (Ball 2003a) the majority of parents preferred schools that set, and this was used in some cases as a measure to distinguish between schools and to eliminate schools from the list.

The disciplinary policies: another set of criteria that was regarded as part of the school's academic environment revolved around the student – staff relations: this included the school's disciplinary policies and practices, the formality or informality of the relationships between staff and children, and generally the rules and regulations that governed the children's conduct and demeanour. It also included references to the pastoral care provided by the school. However, among these only the disciplinary practices of the school were used as a consideration that could lead to rejection or acceptance of a school, and only in that domain did a common pattern occur. Here the general tendency of both sub-groups was to reject schools that appeared to be 'too rigid', 'too formal' or 'too controlling' by way of their disciplinary practices. These were often described as being as firm as 'an army camp' or 'a jail', were accused of 'taming the children'; 'choking the children's spirits / creativity / imagination'; being 'unreasonably inflexible'; 'destroying the children's childhood and their happiness'; 'not giving the children a breathing space / independence / trust'; 'ignoring the teenage rebellious stage' or simply 'having too many rules and regulations' and 'being an unhappy place'.

What the majority of these parents were looking for was a 'family type of school', with 'welcoming / loving / free / happy / supportive environment', 'where my child will be looked after and nurtured', 'where her imaginative spirit will not be seen as cheeky', 'were he is not going to be punished all the time for being naughty', 'where it is OK to be a child a while longer'. Behind this search was the fear that with the socialisation in Israeli homes being generally more relaxed and less disciplined than in British homes, the children's behaviour was likely to be misinterpreted and misunderstood by some teachers, and might be treated as 'deviant or rebellious'; 'non-conforming'; 'naughty'; 'disobedient' or 'misbehaved' or as one mother termed it in Yiddish: 'my kids are treated like 'wildeh hayas' (wild animals RH)'. The parents, some of which have already experienced that type of negative labelling in their children's current schools, were concerned that the disapproving label might affect their children's motivation and spirit, and might result in the child being subjected to constant disciplining and punishment. This was more of a concern for boys than for girls

who were seen to be more easily adaptable and conforming. This point was where the clash between the families' ethnic culture and the schools' middle-class habitus came to life most distinctly leading to the elimination of some prestigious fee-paying schools from the choosers' lists.

This may also explain why one of the favoured criterion among British middle-class choosers, that is, the pupils' demeanour and appearance (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Ball 1997) was rarely ever mentioned by these respondents. Here, the choosers acknowledged that their own children's behaviour might be perceived as 'different' or 'deviant' from the middle-class norms, and thus adjusted their evaluative lenses and preferences accordingly.

This also relates to the issue of uniform, which was mentioned by Ball (1997) as a feature that was positively endorsed by native born middle-class choosers. Among the group studied here, the collective voice was in clear opposition to uniform. Nevertheless, this was not mentioned by any respondent as a major consideration.

Despite the group's clear preferences, the search for the 'right schools' in the disciplinary sense often ended with a compromise as some parents noted that 'all the schools here are just more disciplined than what we're used to'. Making the best out of a compromise situation, some parents noted that their 'rebellious', 'energetic' and 'opinionated', 'hormone controlled', 'dreamy astronaut' and 'fashion oriented' teenager has actually benefited from being in a 'highly disciplined', 'structured' and 'no-nonsense' environment with 'clear boundaries', where they were not allowed to 'colour their hair, wear jewellery or have piercing' or 'pull their skirts up', and were forbidden from 'using their mobile phones'; where 'smoking were treated head-on', and 'bullying was followed by immediate intervention'.

Staff quality: the next criteria by which these parents assessed the school's performance related to the staff. It included the teachers' credentials and experience, their steadiness of employment, and their gender, ethnicity, race,

religion and religiosity, which offered another indication of the school's social mix. The presence of an Israeli or a Jewish teacher was often seen as a positive sign and tended to enhance the parents' sense of familiarity and comfort with the school. The head teacher's personal skills and characteristics were of some importance, and changes of headship were often seen as a 'potential for problems'. Here the background to the parents' discussions was the teachers' shortage crisis, which engendered a sense of growing alarm when teachers or head teachers announced of their plans to leave. The parents shared information about situations of teacher shortages, followed anxiously staff changes, gossiped about internal conflicts among teachers, and seemed to favour schools whose staff situation was showing stability, as these indicated of the general attractiveness of the school from the staff's perspective. Despite the intensive gossip around the issue this was rarely used as a major consideration for acceptance or rejection.

Market markers: the last type of assessment criterion that emerged as a consideration, which was used to discard schools from the outset, was the market position of the school: how popular the school was and whether it was under or over-subscribed. The pattern that emerged among this group was the exclusion of under-subscribed schools from the list. This 'market marker' of under-subscription was seen as an indication of general failure especially given the saturated market conditions in the area. Here the market itself produces its own criteria for assessment and the parents utilised this criterion as a general consideration in their initial delimitation of their landscapes of choice.

To conclude, it appears that the academic aspects of the school assessed through the criteria listed here were of particular importance to these parents, to the extent that all interviewees mentioned these. The centrality of this consideration in their thinking may be explained by its emergence from three different cultural traditions, all of which were deeply rooted in their consciousness. Firstly, their attention to the academic aspect matched their middle-class educational expectations and aspirations for their children's future

as well as their long-term vision (Bourdieu 1986a; Coleman 1988; Ball 2003b), in which academic success and progression to higher education were seen as the expected 'normal biography' (Du-Bois Reymond 1998). Further, these expectations were typical of their Jewish heritage, which emphasises the value of learning and schooling (Glaser and Moynihan 1970; Cohen and Eisen 2000) as well as their homeland's culture (Gold 2002). Thirdly, these aspirations were characteristic of immigrants: many studies repeatedly show that first generation immigrant children succeed in school, and their achievements are often higher than that of native born (Gibson and Bhachu 1991; Ogbu 1991; Zhou 1997b; Portes and McLeod 1996a). Zhou (2001) claims that scholastic achievements and higher education often come to occupy a central place in immigrants' aspirations.

In their search for a school with a matching academic habitus, these parents defined a set of criteria that would enable them to identify schools that were likely to support their cultural reproduction endeavour in the class sense. However, their double facetted standpoint as members of a minority ethnic group, rendered their efforts tricky and indeed risky, and led most of them to a relatively safe, but tight previously-endorsed route that was approved by those who shared their idiosyncratic ethnic assessment schemes.

Inspecting the schools' intake

The second array of assessment criteria mentioned by these parents included the **schools' intake** in terms of gender, class, nationality, religion, ethnicity and race, place of residence and the proportion of pupils with English as second language. With reference to Jewish schools only - the level of observance of families was also mentioned as a criterion for acceptance or rejection. Generally, there were three angles from which the school's intake was discussed among these choosers and presented as a criteria in the choice process: **the social angle**, with the focus being on the child's social life; **the academic angle**, that is, how the school's intake might affect the child's academic aspirations and achievements; and the third angle being the child's

national, religious and ethnic **identities**, which will be discussed separately in the forthcoming sections.

For many parents, especially the devotees whose choices mirrored their social preferences, the social-mix was of prime importance. However, as the parent quoted below argued, the centrality of this criterion in the choice process appeared to be implanted in the system rather than a matter of personal preference and priority:

> *Ben: The schools here, there is no real difference between them, accept their intake. In order to choose – you must have different options, my emphasis is on **different** – but, they all teach the same curriculum, all use the same old teaching methods, all have to have the same management structures, so what's the point of all that choice? Choosing between schools with different student-populations?? (Interview no. 2).*

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the attention to social-mix as a major criterion in the choice process was highlighted by many researchers in Britain (Adler, Petch and Tweedy 1989; Walford 1992; Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1996; Ball, Macrae and Maguire 1998b; Ball 1997). Despite the centrality of the social demography of the school in these analyses, the 'child's social life' was rarely mentioned as a significant aspect of this consideration and seems to be more typical of working class choosers (Reay and Ball 1997; Walford 1992; David, West, and Ribbens 1994; Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1995).

It is important to note here that in contrast to the newcomers' children, who tended to engage mainly with their co-nationals, the veterans' children indeed socialised beyond their ethnic circle and formed strong and stable ties both within and outside this circle. Among this group of choosers, **'the social issue'** appeared as a criterion for choice in almost every account, with parents demonstrating a concern for 'the children ties in the school' and their 'after-school social life', often more than the children themselves:

> *Liora: We discussed High Plains and I was sort of concerned that none of her friends was going there, but she said – don't worry mum, I will make new friends there (Interview no. 10).*

This accent on social life was unquestionably an imported concept from the homeland and its collective ethos, but may also be seen as a marker of the choosers' uneasy positioning as middle-class ethnics, and their sense of marginality and discomfort emanating from this duality. Furthermore, as I shall later illustrate, these parents acknowledged the impact of social ties on their children's developing identities and thus placed this issue at the centre of their choice agenda.

On a more concrete level, the parents' concern was to ensure that the child 'will not be lonely', 'will make friends quickly', 'will have a vivid social circle' and 'busy social life', 'and will find a group of people she feels comfortable with' in the new school. The devotees were able to have some assurances with regard to their children's social life by opting for the safe and familiar social environment of communal schools. Many of them admitted that the 'social life' criteria was the most central 'pull factor' working in favour of communal schools. Non-conformists did not see this criterion as a major one, but were also worried about their children's social life, especially if they were about to transfer from a communal to a non-communal school.

Here nationality, ethnicity, religion (and religiosity) and indeed class, and even the children's place of residence, surfaced as important in addressing and thinking about the children's social ties:

> *Liora: I was told there were lots of Jewish girls there and since she was going to Eden (Jewish youth club) and already had some Jewish friends from there I thought well, she would be fine there (Interview no. 10).*

> *Orna: At first I feared that the school would be full with little snobbish white British girls sort of from upper middle-class. But I went there and there were Hindus and Japanese and black girls, and many Jewish princesses, but you know, seeing all this ethnic mixture put my mind at ease, because I knew she would not be the only minority there (Interview no. 11).*

> *Gita: A friend whose child was there and left warned me that they were too religious and that her son's social life – well basically he didn't have one because on Saturday they all went to the Synagogue in Erlington and he didn't want to hear about it. There was no one living in this area that*

> *he could mingle with. So I was a bit concerned but when I learned that he would be going with two close friends – I said fine, at least those would be there for him (Interview no. 19).*

The concern for the child's social life often led to the rejection of single-sex schools, especially for boys and the single-sex school was often perceived by parents as 'an environment that does not reflect life' and thus as 'un-natural'. However, some parents recognised that 'the best schools here are single-sex, what can you do?' and thus were willing to make compromises over this issue in their search for 'the right school' academically.

From this seemingly non-scholastic perspective, communal and Jewish schools offered a potential for friendship with 'others like us' and a 'secured route', which was both, class orientated and ethnically defined. Here the social boundaries narrowed and the emotive search for the 'right' social match was magnified by 'horror stories' (Ball 2003a) of the 'wrong choice' that resulted 'in having no social life', the child 'being lonely', or 'left out'; 'he was constantly harassed', 'she had no friends', and 'she just felt different'. Although none of the interviewees had encountered racist reactions, some parents made the point that 'being a not so favoured minority' there was 'in the back of my mind' a fear of 'falling into an anti-semitic or an anti-Israeli environment', and the risk of the child being subjected to a racist atmosphere. Here aspects of the choosers' identities – especially their national identity – and their position as a minority ethnic group began to surface, and the criterion for choice was set to prevent situations where the children will be marginalised and positioned as 'others' (Ball, Reay and David 2002). Evidently, the narratives presented earlier detailing voluntary transfers initiated for these reasons, served to enhance the significance of this consideration and magnified the choosers' sense of risk. Thus in a sense, the friendship criteria set here served as a risk management tactic aimed at preventing any type of 'wrong choices'.

The centrality of 'the social issue' in the veteran's thinking was related to the academic issue: many parents voiced their beliefs that social lives were 'extremely important, especially for teenagers' and that vivid and steady ties

were essential for the development of their children's personalities, social skills and emotional welfare and for their academic aspirations, work ethos and motivation. As one parent noted: 'when did you ever see an unhappy child succeeding in school?'.

This ties with the second issue raised by some parents in this category in relation to the schools' **social mix**: how they perceived its impact on their children's motivation, aspirations, and ultimately their **achievements**. Here their middle -class dispositions and visions clearly appeared, as these parents portrayed the 'ambitious', 'motivated' educational environments they sought and stated their beliefs that these were created not only by the school, but also, and perhaps mainly, by the children who were enrolled in the school and their homes. In that sense, social mix was also tied up with the school's academic spirit as well as the orderliness of the learning environment. As Ball (2003a) notes, in these parents' thinking 'schools can be only as good as their intake' (p. 155). Indeed, similar to native born parents surveyed by Ball (1997) 'who goes to the school' was of prime importance, and these parents were clearly looking for a 'match' to their own middle-class dispositions by scanning the schools for middle-class signs during open evenings. These could be anything, from the cars parked in the schools parking, the number of babies brought by parents to the open evening (which meant that these families did not employ baby-sitters), to the parents' clothing, jewellery, mobile phones, language and accent and general demeanour. However, the quest for middle-class environment was complicated by the search for the 'right' ethnic, racial and religious mix as parents tended to avoid schools 'where he will be the only minority', or 'where she would be the only Jew / Israeli'. Here the glass ceiling materialised as these parents' sense of 'being an unwanted minority' and their fear of anti-semitic environment, led to their tendency to exclude themselves from high-achieving, fee-paying, prestigious schools that felt 'too white' or 'too British' and those that had 'no minorities'. These schools may have had the correct middle-class habitus but the wrong ethnic mix, and were rejected on these grounds.

Here their middle-classness and ethnicity sat awkwardly together with each working to erect social barriers. Because the ability to correctly identify the typical clientele of each school was of such importance, many parents opted for the two alternatives where they were sure to find the correct match: communal schools where they could find their compatriots, with whom they shared similar educational perceptions and aspirations, which the majority of this group opted for, and Jewish schools, where those enrolled were perceived as having similar motivations, ambitions, and cultural views: 'we all value learning, it's a Jewish thing', 'what does the Jewish mother want her son to be? a doctor or a lawyer!'.

These preferences were also related to their own embeddedness within the ethnic community, and their acknowledgement that these 'ambitions' and 'high aspirations' emanated from the children's social environment in school, as well as outside. Indeed, research has shown that immigrants from families who are associated with tightly knit social networks consistently show better psychological conditions, higher level of academic achievements and stronger educational aspirations than isolated families (Gibson 1991; Ogbu 1991). High achievements were related to a strong sense of group affiliation, family loyalty and mutual help (Portes and McLeod 1996a; Borjas 1992; Coleman 1988). These findings point to the importance of social and ethnic capital both in the school and outside, thus tying closer the two environments and their combined impact in terms of socialisation, and creating, yet again, a pressure to conform to the communal educational path.

Listening to these reports highlighted their silences: there was little exclusionary discourse in their narratives, and there were more reports of self-exclusion, where parents felt the school was 'too posh' or 'too British' for them. However, it is important to note here that these veteran parents were skilled in hiding 'politically incorrect' prejudiced voices. Further, as shown in their gate-keeping function exclusionary discourses did occur among this group in the discussions they had with less experienced choosers. Here their views of the 'incorrect mix' indeed surfaced:

Talli: It's near a council house and most of the kids there come from that estate ...no, I have never heard of anyone going there (Casual conversation no. 8).

Orit: It's such a bad school, they had such problems with it, even the people from the estate nearby ran away from it (Casual conversation no. 32).

Liora: The school was swamped by refugees, and all the Brits fled to Meadway. They now have 60% kids with English as second language. Not that having English as a second language is a problem, but having 60% of those is! (Casual conversation no. 112).

Oren: He was the only Jew and probably the only while child there (Casual conversation no. 43).

Sari: That school is 'too black' (too religious RH) for us (Casual conversation no. 335).

In these narratives the demarcation between the 'correct mix' and the incorrect was clearly articulated for the benefit of the inexperienced choosers. The acts of closure visualised earlier, in which the veteran parents were very much the main gatekeepers, return full cycle to define their own horizons for action, as both devotees and non-conformists followed a carefully pre-defined educational path, in which their 'in-between' culture – their middle-class positions as well as their minority ethnic status - played central stage and balanced out:

> 'In a sense the circle closes. The search for a place of safety is a search for others like us, informed and reinforced by decisions made by and advice given by those others like us, whom we can trust' (Ball 2003a: 64).

Longing and belonging

The search for 'others like us' in the school seems to be closely tied with the choosers' identities, whether these are class based, ethnic, religious or national. This is the essence of the following sections, in which I shall attempt to unpack the central theme that dominated the veteran embedded choosers' school choice narratives: their identities. In the sections that follow, I shall focus on three aspects of the respondents' hybrid identities: their **national identities**, their **religiosity**, and their **ethnicity**. In each of the following sections I shall

describe the **parents' and the children's identities**, and highlight the ways in which these identities surfaced as a **parameter in the choice process.**

In analysing the veteran's national identities it became apparent that similar to the newcomers quoted earlier, the embedded parents revealed a strong sense of Israeli identity, with barely any of them perceiving themselves as British. This was although most have already acquired British citizenship:

> *Lily: It doesn't matter how many years I will live here, I will always be an Israeli (Casual conversation no. 126).*

> *Rina: No Israeli will say that he is British, and no one will ever be an ex-Israeli. There is no such thing. You cannot divorce your homeland (Casual conversation no. 112).*

This finding was in line with the general migration literature (Zhou 1997b; Alba and Nee 1997; Perlman and Waldinger 1997) and the research on Israeli emigrants (Shokeid 1988; Gold 1994; 2000; Urieli 1995; McNamara 1987) whose findings suggest that first generation adult immigrants tend to preserve their original national identities and rarely identify themselves in terms of their host's country. In line with these identifications, some veterans (mainly women) voiced a strong sense of belonging to their homeland:

> *Liora: It's the only place I feel that I belong to. It is the only home that I will ever have (Casual conversation no. 45).*

However, their feelings were not commonly shared; most veterans began to experience changes in their sense of belonging (Isaacs 1975) and sense of place, and these changes manifested themselves in different ways. The parent quoted below felt detached from both countries:

> *Ronit: I feel I don't belong anywhere. I don't feel that I belong here, although I am comfortable here, there isn't that sense of attachment that I had in Israel. But in my recent visits to Israel, I felt that it wasn't my home anymore either. I guess I am homeless (Casual conversation no. 137).*

The more frequently voiced self-perception among veteran families reflected their bi-cultural stance, as they reported a sense of connection to both

countries, and of 'having two (mental) homes' or 'living with one foot here and one foot there':

> *Sara: Home is both here and there! I live here for 22 years. London is my home! But I also maintain my ties in Israel – I'm very involved, I travel a lot. My daughter lives there. So, it's my home too (Casual conversation no. 168).*

This type of duality was articulated by trans-nationals, who were practically living in two countries, but also by many settlers. A few veterans, mainly men, who immigrated at a relatively young age to Britain, stated a sense of belonging to Britain and perceived Israel as a holiday resort:

> *David: For me home is where my family and friends are, and my closest circle is here. When I go to Israel I feel like a tourist, and you know, I like it that way, 'cause I really enjoy myself now that I don't feel it's mine. I don't care that much and don't get upset about things (Casual conversation no. 344).*

And there were others, again mostly men, who felt detached from both countries yet untroubled by their lack of attachment. Some of them discarded the issue as pointless and insignificant, as well as a typical feminine perception:

> *Adam: What are you women babbling about - belong – shmelong ?? You're searching for something that does not exist! I don't belong – and I don't care! It doesn't affect my life... You have been brainwashed to think it's important to feel something towards where you live – It's not! You can lead a perfectly happy life without it! (Casual conversation no.45).*

The diverse voices cited here engaging with the idea of national identity and belonging, highlight the changes that occurred as they progressed along their intercultural adaptation journey. These narratives also expose the fluidity and positional nature of their identities (Hall 1996). As I shall demonstrate later, these self-perceptions were closely tied with the parents' expectations from their children, and influenced their choice of school.

The research on second-generation immigrants overwhelmingly reports a drift away from the strong national identification that characterises the first generation. The research suggests that the second generation realises identities that symbolise both their new national affiliation and their ethnic

ancestry (Tuan 1999; Zhou 1997b; Bacon 1999). In terms of national identities, most adopt an additional national identity and thus identify themselves as dual nationals (German-American, Chinese-British) (Gold 1994; Tuan 1999; Portes and Zhou 1993; Kitano 1992). While invisible ethnics may be able to avoid stating their dual heritage and may identify themselves as 'British' solely, visible ethnics are less able to do so (Tuan 1999; Nagel 1994). Bacon (1999) argues that second generation immigrants appear to be in the most awkward position. They can no longer identify in terms of their parents' national identity, nor are they able to wholly adopt their host's national identity; 'they are the 'halfway' generation (Zhou 1997b) required to participate in the social worlds of both their foreign born parents and their native born peers' (Bacon 1999: 145). They are 'stuck between two worlds' and often need to respond to pressures emanating from both.

The findings relating to the children's identities among veterans' embedded families agree with the research literature: only few, mainly expatriates, felt that their children's identities remained as strong as theirs, acknowledging the temporariness of their migration circumstances:

> *Bracha: It's different for us, our children know they are here temporarily, and treat their stay here as sort of prolonged tourist journey. So, although they do pick up the manners and the language, they have a strong Israeli identity (Interview no. 40).*

However, this was not the case among settlers: while the national identity of the parents' generation was stable, their children's identities, as the parents perceived them, did not exhibit the same resilience:

> *Ben: They are, they feel Israeli in some ways, and yet, I know that they are not (Interview no. 2).*

Similar to many other respondents, the interviewee quoted here acknowledged that his children do feel some sense of attachment to Israel, but in contrast to his own identity, his children's bonds were fragile. When prompted, most veterans noted that they would have liked their children to have some sense of attachment to Israel, but also acknowledged that 'raising an Israeli child abroad' for whom 'Israel is just a holiday resort' is not a realistic endeavour: 'it's a bit

absurd to even try to raise an Israeli child in London' as one parent articulated it. As the children's Israeli identities became thin, some parents reasoned that with their children's progression along the cross-cultural adaptation course, they were gradually 'becoming British':

> *Ella: They are British girls... and I cannot expect them to have an Israeli identity – why should they? They did not live there (Interview no. 14).*

> *Liora: He said: 'you brought me here, you have turned me into an Englishmen' (Interview no. 10).*

However, many parents felt that their children's new national identity – their British identity - was also shaky and fragile; a finding that seems to agree with the research literature on the second generation:

> *Adam: My girls have no identity; they are neither Israelis nor English. They don't know who they are, they have no roots; detached from the Israeli culture, and not really attached to the English. It may not disturb them at this stage of their lives - but it bothers me (Casual conversation no. 162).*

Others acknowledged the difficult position of the children and perceived them as being 'stuck between two worlds':

> *Galia: The kids here are torn between two worlds, and that troubles me. Kids need to have a strong sense of belonging. They need roots. Growing up here – they simply cannot have that (Casual conversation no. 110).*

The parent quoted below acknowledged the ways in which others label and perceive her children and noted the resulting ambivalence in her son's identity:

> *Nira: During our last visit to Israel Ben went with a friend to his junior high school, and he felt out of place, he was regarded as 'the English' child. But here, in his school, they treat him as 'the Israeli'. It made me realise that he's not here not there. He doesn't belong anywhere (Interview no. 18).*

This was also where the parents' thoughts about the school's role as the children's main socialisation agent began to surface. Some parents related their children's weak British identity to the socialisation in British schools, and argued that the lack national ethos and state ideologies in the schools, and their multicultural philosophy, had led to the weakness and ambivalence of the children's identities:

Dan: One of the best thing I think that children in Israel get - we got it - is a crystallized personality. We know who we are, and nothing will change this. I know some will say that we were brainwashed by the system, but the end result is, we have clear sense of who we are. But here, I look at all these children around me; they are spineless. There is nothing there to 'build up' that type of strong identity that we have. The schools are so 'politically correct', they want to be seen 'multi-cultural' and so, there is no clear message of Britishness there (Casual conversation no. 162).

However, not all parents were concerned about the national identities of their children in this way. There were other voices among these embedded parents, who appreciated the multi-cultural messages and absence of national accent in their schools, which enabled them as a minority ethnic group, to cultivate their homeland culture and their children's Israeli identity:

Dana: I think we would all be standing on our 'back feet' (be defensive about RH) if we felt that there was pressure on our kids to be British or Christian or to hide their nationality or language, or religion. At Parkway, the Head asked two (Israeli) girls to speak English at break time – the next day the two mothers stormed in and made a formal complaint (Casual conversation no. 418).

Other parents were clearly satisfied with the multi- cultural ethos of the chosen schools and voiced their appreciation of their non-obtrusive cultural education and general tolerance:

Tali: They're getting here an experience that will enrich their lives - meeting with others from other cultures, religions, learning to live, to get along with them in an environment that respects them all, and celebrates all the different holidays and sort of gives space to all those different colours. I wouldn't have liked them to miss on this experience (Casual conversation no. 141).

Orna: They are becoming what I would define as 'citizens of the world'. They are able to adapt themselves to different situations, different countries with no problems. They develop here a kind of flexibility that I think, is important, even essential in this multi-cultural world (Interview no. 11).

These parents valued their children's bi-lingual and bi-cultural educational experience in these schools and perceived it as a life enriching experience.

The parents' discussions over the children's identity in relation to the schools often led to the question of the school social mix and how it may affect the

children's national identities. Here the devotees voiced a strong united opinion that communal schools have strengthened their children's sense of attachment to Israel, and that the children's social circle had a crucial role in maintaining their 'Israeliness':

> *Renni: I met this Israeli family who live outside London, and their children attend local schools in their area.. After less than 3 years - their children act English. They speak English with each other, all their friends are English. They are completely detached from the Israeli swamp. Our children are in a different position altogether - because they're surrounded by other Israelis, in and out of school, that maintains their Israeliness (Casual conversation no. 45).*

The shared belief underlying the choice of a communal school was that the children's social circle has a significant impact on their identities, which was perceived as being stronger than the school's effect. However, the mother quoted below, a non-conformist whose children went to non-communal schools, reported that her child's Israeli identity has strengthened in an environment where she was 'different':

> *Margalit: There, her Israeli identity meant something. It was different, one of a kind, so to my surprise, that made her feel more attached to her Israeli side (Interview no. 23).*

This finding agrees with Hall's (1996) notion that identities are constructed through difference: 'it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what is not, identity can be constructed' (p. 4-5). However, as seen here, the two narratives provide contradictory evidence, suggesting that outer-group associations can either strengthen or weaken the children's national identities.

One of the main differences between devotees and non-conformists was in their perceptions of their own and their children's identities: the majority of devotees expressed a strong sense of identification and attachment to Israel, and voiced their wish that their children would maintain their homeland national identity. Many of them explored, questioned and pondered their children's national identities and strongly voiced their belief that communal schools can sustain the children's bonds with their homeland and its culture through their ties with their Israeli schoolmates, and chose these schools for this reason. In contrast, the

non-conformists displayed a sense of attachment to both countries and accepted their children's hyphenated identities. Concomitantly, their children's national identities were rarely linked to their schooling experiences or mentioned as a consideration.

An additional dimension of national identities is the ethno-linguistic identity of immigrants and their offspring. The research findings suggest that while the first and second generations still speak the homeland language, later generations rarely do (Zhou 1997; Tuan 1999; Bacon 1999; Lopez 1996). English monolinguism at home increases from one generation to the next and the shift was more rapid in the third generation than in the second (Lopez 1996; Zhou 1997b; Bankston and Zhou 1995).

The findings relating to the veterans' language usage, demonstrate that almost without exception, the parents in this category spoke Hebrew at home between parents as well as with their children. Most saw it as an important way of maintaining the children's ethno-linguistic identity and ties with the homeland, although they noted that the children's main language was no longer Hebrew:

> *Lily: We only speak Hebrew with them, but they speak English between them. Their English level is much higher than their Hebrew level (Casual conversation no. 146).*
>
> *Dana: It's getting more and more difficult to get them to speak Hebrew, we are at a bizarre point where we (the parents) speak Hebrew to them but they answer in English (Casual conversation no. 17).*

Here the parents marked their ethnolinguistic identities by stating their own commitment to their homeland tongue but also noted the difficulties in intergenerational succession in that domain. The devotees noted that there were two factors that aided them in their attempt to maintain their children's linguistic capacities: the Sunday school where the children engaged with Hebrew speaking peers and staff, and their children's school ties particularly with their newly arrived Hebrew-speaking peers. Consequently, their choice of school was informed by their wish for the children to maintain their linguistic capacities. In contrast, non-conformists hardly ever mentioned the issue of

language as a consideration.

In conclusion, the reports displayed here on the parents' and children's national identities, delineate their movement along the cross cultural adaptation course suggesting that the emotive search for 'people like us' in the school was the search for connection and identification, the longing to a 'sense of belonging' that symbolised the homeland. The findings suggest that the parents maintained their national identities, but acknowledged that this was not a realistic possibility for their offspring. Nevertheless, the hope that the children will maintain some sense of attachment to the homeland encouraged the devotees to prefer schools with a high percentage of their compatriots, which offered the possibility for intergenerational transmission of their own identifications and language. In contrast, the non-conformists were more willing to accept that 'our children are British' and were looking for schools that could offer a less confusing environment in that domain. The choice of school was thus about sustaining different aspects of the children's identities (Ball, Reay and David 2003; Ball 2003b): while devotees chose a route that enabled the maintenance of their children's attachment to their homeland, the non-devotees opted for schools that ensured the reproduction of their class identification.

The romance of ethnicity

The second type of identification that parents touched on in their discussions on their children schooling was their ethnicity. This sense of identification was mainly displayed in the parents' a sense of place with reference to Hill View Gardens, 'the ghetto':

> *Irit: I do feel a sort of attachment to the Hill, some call it a ghetto, and perhaps it is, but here, I don't feel like a stranger, it feels homely (Casual conversation no. 212).*

> *Orna: When I go out there I know everybody and I am familiar with everything, and its just feels comfortable (Casual conversation no. 56).*

This sense of comfort and familiarity with their locality seemed to emanate from their strong ties with their compatriots. Here again, the kinship discourse appeared as they explored their ties with community members:

> *Lily: Today I have got stronger friendships here than I do in Israel, and they are like my family (Casual conversation no. 224).*

Further, veterans were united in their views that that despite the lack of organisational structure the ethnic community was a concrete construct in their lives, one that they were strongly attached to:

> *Tali: Oh yes, there is definitely a community here, not as big and not as strong as the Jewish community, but it's there.*
> *Rona: And if I wanted to meet that community, where would you take me?*
> *Tali: To the Israeli coffee shops on the main roads, to the Sunday school, to Alton, to my house on Chanukah (Interview no. 27).*
>
> *Renni: We are a community in every sense you can think of; we live in the same area, speak the same language, think and behave in the same way, we spend a lot of time together, our kids grow up together like we were family, we help each other. Look around you – there are people who employ others, lend each other cars, houses, and money. We feel a sense of responsibility towards each other, what else do you need to be called a community? (Interview no. 7).*

The sense of belonging demonstrated here regarding the locality and the community, was in line with their emerging bi-cultural sense of place, their ethnicity and its reinvented 'in between' culture. The ethnic culture has developed distinct local discourses, which affect the ways in which members perceive their group affiliation as well as their own settlement. One of these typical discourses was their statutory positioning as temporary sojourners:

> *Miri: We plan to go back, some day (Casual conversation no. 15).*
>
> *Osnat: I cannot see myself grow old here. When the kids grow up and fly the nest, I see myself going back (Casual conversation no. 185).*

Conversely, during the past years changes began to occur in these views and new voices began to take central stage. Some of these were cynical and critical expressions that acknowledged the incongruence between their temporary stance and their prolonged stay in London. Those articulating these opinions often discarded the 'temporariness' discourse as an empty ritual that has no

bearing on life, nor on members' plans with regard to settlement:

> *Ronit: People here say they are 'temporaries'; everybody seems to plan to go back at some point. When? when the child grows up. How old is the child? 2 years old! (Casual conversation no. 194).*
>
> *Michal: People live here 'on their suitcases', sort of mentally ready to go back, sometimes for 15, 20 years (Casual conversation no. 150).*

In contrast to the newcomers who were less able to perceive their stay as a permanent one, the veterans were beginning to demonstrate a sense of commitment to their locality and their ethnic community resulting in a more resolute view of their settlement:

> *Elisheva: I'm not ashamed to say I'm staying. I love Israel, and it'll always be my homeland, but I do not see myself living there (Casual conversation no. 432).*

However, choosing to be a member of an ethnic community, meant for many, that they were in practice choosing to seclude themselves socially, revealing through their actions their anti-assimilative stance. Most of the parents in this group reported that during the years they have lived in London they have established ties mainly if not only with Israelis:

> *Dani: I've been here 15 years now, and all of my friends are Israelis. I have Jewish colleagues, non-Jewish business partners, I get along with them fine, but I don't see them as my friends (Casual conversation no. 149).*
>
> *Carmela: Most of our friends are Israelis, and it has been like that from day one (Casual conversation no. 46).*

They also acknowledged that as individuals and as a group they did not establish contact with Jews nor with Jewish organisations around them:

> *Ora: I live next door to a Jewish family, and except for civil hellos we did not exchange a word for the past 10 years. I do not belong to a shul, and my only engagement with Jews is when I go shopping, and well, yes, through the school (secondary Jewish school) (Casual conversation no. 133).*

Some felt rejected by Jews:

> *Dana: They don't really like us, I think the fact that we are here, you know, Yordim (emigrants from Israel), it's like our presence here is a message that Israel is a bad place to live in, and they don't want us to*

spread that message, and also, there are the cultural differences and the language, and the fact that we do not go to the shul – that we're so openly secular (Casual conversation no. 214).

Further, similar to the newcomers, the majority preferred their in-group ties to associations outside the community:

Elia: During the first years at the uni, I tried to establish relations with them, and I had a few friends then, one Hindu and one French, but when we graduated, those relationships disintegrated very quickly, and since then, my friends are all Israelis (Casual conversation no. 248).

Rina: It's actually quite sad how we all live in this bubble. Most of us do not even try to establish ties with them (Casual conversation no. 107).

These findings agree with the research conducted on Israeli emigrants in the USA (Gold 2002; Shokeid, 1988; Mittleberg and Waters 1992), which demonstrates that Israelis tend to associate mainly within the Israeli community and do not integrate in their locality, nor with the local Jewish community.

This brings the discussion back to the schooling issue: as seen in the veteran's discussions on the school's social mix, the sense of attachment to the ethnic community seemed to feed back into the process of choice and featured strongly in their considerations, particularly those related to the child's friendships, thus generating a strong pull towards communal schools. The choice of school, for most of the embedded parents was about sustaining their own and their children's ethnic membership through the schools.

The differences between devotees and non-conformists appeared in two domains: while most devotees perceived their stay in London as a temporary journey, the non-conformists were more resolved as to their settlement plans. Further, the devotees were more reliant than non-conformists on the school and on their children's ties for the maintenance or expansion of their intra-ethnic ties.

While the adults immersed in communal life and their vision of life seemed to emanate from the ethnic culture, the children displayed a weaker sense of

attachment to the community. The parents' reports regarding their children's ties with the ethnic community in London suggest that the children did not envision the community as the parents did, and that most children, both those attending communal schools as well as those who did not attend them, developed ties with non-Israelis:

> *Bracha: Her best friends are two Israelis who came with us, so they have been together for 4 years now, but she has lots of Jewish friends from the school, and she now has a new boy-friend, which is a bit more religious than us, so we shall see how it'll work (Interview no. 40).*

This was a typical pattern among those attending communal schools who often had both Israeli and non-Israeli friends. Moreover, there were those who did not mingle with their co-nationals although they could:

> *Nurit: The kids have non-Israeli friends. In fact most of the friends he dates and brings home are non-Israeli (Casual conversation no. 216).*

And those in non-communal schools made friends beyond their ethnic circle:

> *Adam: It's just great to see: her best friend is Chinese and she has got two others that she goes out with – one Jew who lives two roads from here, and is orthodox, and one Hindu. And they all get along! (Interview no. 1)*

These findings were indeed in line with studies conducted on white migrants, but in contrast to the research on Jewish communities: the research suggests that most white native born ethnics have no links to their ethnic communities (Gans 1979; Waters 1990), although there are some exceptions of white migrants who continue to maintain their ties with the ethnic community in the immigration area, most notably Jews (Schmool and Cohen 1998; Cohen and Eisen 2000; Cornell and Hartmann 1988).

As seen here, despite the parents' efforts, particularly those of devotees, to find a school that could offer the possibility of intra-ethnic associations, and to engender a social circle around their children, which would encourage the preservation of their national identity and homeland tongue, the children, charted their own social routes that pulled them away from their parents' ethnic circles.

On religion and tradition

The last aspect of the respondents' identities that altered as a result of their adaptation process was their religious identity. The research suggests that first generation migrants tend to maintain their religious identities and practices and identify themselves in terms their religious affiliation (Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish etc.) (Alumkal 1999; Warner and Wittner 1998). The second generation tends to be less religious than their immigrant parents, although some may still identify themselves in terms their religious affiliation (Alumkal 1999). However, here most respondents were secular, which seemed to engender a different pattern than that recorded by migration researchers; the veterans' narratives suggest a more significant change has occurred - the reinvention of their Jewish identities:

> *Adam: Nothing has changed in our religiosity, we're still secular as we were, we do not go to the synagogue, or do anything religious-wise that we didn't do in Israel. But in Israel I didn't feel particularly Jewish, and here I do! (Interview no.1).*
>
> *Rennin: I didn't have a Jewish identity before I came here. Now I do and it's nothing to do with how I practice it. It's more to do with how they (non Jews) see me and perhaps about living here in this Jewish ghetto, and going in and out of it every day (Interview no. 7).*

The interviewees quoted here, acknowledged that the changes brought by their immigration, occasioned self-consciousness and self-ascription: recognition of their affiliation with the Jewish peoplehood and an awareness of its distinctiveness (Hall 1996). Furthermore, as the respondent noted, the changes in her own Jewish identity may be explained by the circumstances of her life, in which her Jewish identity was countered by others who were different, and where her identity entailed repeated representation (Hall 1996). Indeed, as seen here, people come to understand who they are by discovering how other people see them and label them:

> *Renni: When I say I am from Israel – most of them do not know where it is, and it's just meaningless to them. But when I say I'm Jewish – it's something they understand. I have no idea what it means to them, whether it's good or bad. I noticed when I say I am Jewish and secular – that throws them off completely, as if Jew equals orthodox (practicing).*

They are Christian and secular, why can't they get 'Jewish and secular? (Interview no. 7).

However, as demonstrated in this quote, ethnic, racial and religious identities often rely on labels that are available in the public realm (Bacon 1999).

In line with their newly acquired identification, more than half of the veteran interviewees reported on changes in their religious practices. These were slight changes, often in nuance, rather than in general stance:

Ruth: I now make it a point to have a proper Friday dinner with Kiddush and everything, and that goes for all the other holidays. It's now become more important to celebrate them fully. I want the children to have that Jewish spirit. It's very easy to slip here into nothing, no tradition, no roots (Interview no. 13).

Shelly: Here there is nothing to remind you that there is a holiday, if the kids are not in a Jewish school, you just don't know. So as the years went, I made it a point to go to the synagogue at least during the High-holidays, and also we make every holiday celebration into an event – we invite at least few families, and we make a whole thing out of it. On Friday I now bake the cake, although I have a great bakery just around the corner, and it's because I want them to feel the Friday spirit, so that they come home and there's the Shabbat (Saturday) aroma in the air (Interview no. 50).

The findings presented here draw attention to two points: although the adults' generation national identity remained stable many years after their migration, all other aspects of their identities seemed to shift in one direction: their ethnicity has grown stronger and their religious identification has amplified. Because they were not engaged with the Jewish community and its organisations, particularly the synagogue, they have developed a Jewish identity that is unrelated to their religious practices. Nevertheless, particularly for intergenerational transmission purposes, these parents began to reengage with their religious heritage and customs.

Further, the majority of parents in this category felt that being secular as they were, meant that they were unable to impart their children with the sense of tradition nor with the practices of their heritage, and thus, many searched for Jewish schools as a way of ensuring their children receive through their formal

curricula as well as through the school practices and networks the basics of their Jewish traditions (Gaine and George 1999):

> *Daniella: I wasn't aware, wasn't at all aware that after 5 years I would feel this way. When I came here I didn't even bother to look at the Jewish schools. I chose Alton because I thought it would give the children the opportunity to meet with other Israelis. But now, after a few months in a Jewish school, you don't know what it means to him to be able to sing the holiday songs with me, and it means a lot to me too, just to be able to share some of his experiences in this way. It's only now that I understand how alienated I felt beforehand (Casual conversation no. 333).*

> *Ruth: I wanted a Jewish school because of its Jewish content, point. I can't give them this content. I am not knowledgeable enough. It doesn't disturb me, I chose to be secular, but I want them to know enough to choose how they want to be, and how much tradition they want to have in their lives (Interview no. 13).*

But, this is not a view shared by all parents. Some regarded the Jewish schools' religious culture as inconsistent with the family's secular values and preferred non-religious schools:

> *Avi: We are totally secular. Choosing a Jewish school, for us, would be looking for trouble. I heard of families being asked by the school to comply with certain manners. I do not want to be in a situation where I am going to have to justify my life style to anybody. So no. Jewish schools were out of the question for us (Interview no. 33).*

> *Adam: I don't like the idea of Jewish schools.*
> *Rona: why?*
> *Adam: It's just too Jewish. And she's not living in a Jewish State now. She is not a part of the Jewish world. She's not going to be more Jewish if she goes there, and she isn't going to be less Jewish by going to a non-Jewish school. She doesn't need the Jewish aspect (Interview no. 1).*

There were also some retrospective reports of the ways in which Jewish schooling has affected the children's religious identities and family practices. In the following quotes the children brought home the practices of the religious school, and the family accommodated:

> *Miri: Since he's been there (Jewish school) it's like he found himself, finally linked with his roots, he became proud and definitely more attached to his Jewish identity. He comes back sometimes asking us to do traditional things – like doing a proper Kidush on Friday, having no Hamez during Pessah – and I'm happy to comply (Interview no. 8).*

Shani: He asked to go to the shul every Saturday because his classmates were meeting there. I was a bit surprised, but I thought, no harm in that, so Dan (his dad) went with him. He also asked that I buy Kosher foods when he brings his friends home and I did, and I was considering to do a proper separation of cutlery, but he said that it wasn't necessary as long as we have disposable cutlery, so I made it a habit to have kosher food and plastic cutlery at all times (Interview no. 56).

But again this was not always the case. In the quotes below the children responded unfavourably to the schools' religious environment, and the clash between home and the school's culture has strengthened their secular identities:

Liora: It did not work so well. The school, well, no, not the school, the kids in his age group and particularly in his class were all Shomer Shabbat (Orthodox religious), so when they went to their shul on Saturday he stayed home, firstly because we live too far (for him to walk there RH) but also he didn't want to go to shul. So he was basically isolated socially. And so, this actually put him off Judaism – now he doesn't want anything to do with religion, tradition (Interview no. 10).

Karen: He didn't like the school, it all felt too religious – the separation of the classes (by gender RH), the praying 3 times a day, the assemblies, the fact that they do not teach other religions. His social life was also very limited, he had one good friend, he never dated any girls...he wasn't invited to their parties. He became very rebellious, and used to challenge his Jewish Studies teachers...now he mocks everything we do that has anything to do with religion (Interview no. 34).

It was clear from these reports that the parents perceived Jewish schools as having a direct and indirect effect - through the Jewish curriculum, the school's religious practices and through informal school associations - on their children's Jewish identities and the families' religious practices. However, the reports suggest that the influence of Jewish schools on the child's religiosity could be in all directions: depending on the school's religiosity in relation to the home's, the schooling experience may strengthen or weaken their religiosity or have no effect on it. In line with these perceptions, the parents were aware of the potential clash between home and school's religiosity, and thus as they engaged with the choice process they examined these Jewish schools thoroughly, looking at the visible signs of religiosity in its curriculum and practices, as well as its intake, and listened to their compatriot's comments as

they explored the impact of the Jewish environment on their children's self-perceptions. Consequently, some schools were rejected as 'too religious' and eliminated from their lists.

Conversely, some parents whose children were enrolled in non-Jewish schools also noticed changes in their children's Jewish identities:

> *Ronit: I think we all become more aware of our affiliations here... Because they meet with others, from different nationalities and religions...My daughter learned to define herself as a Jew here, I think in Israel this definition ... not that it isn't important, it just isn't part of your daily life in a way it is here... (Casual conversation no. 219).*

These accounts suggest that similar to the parents' identities their children's Jewish identities developed vis-a-vis others (Hall 1998; Cornell and Hartman 1998). Further, messages and expectations coming from 'others' encouraged these families to 'act Jewish' where appropriate, at least in the public domain:

> *Renni: The school is working during Rosh Hashana, so I could send them, but I am not going to. I think they sort of expect them not to come. They expect them to be like the other Jews in the school (Casual conversation no. 88).*

> *Orna: I sent them to school during Pessah with bread in their lunch packs, and they came back home telling me that their classmates asked them why they brought bread instead of Mazzah. So the next day I had to go and get a Mazzah, which I didn't bother to buy beforehand (Interview no. 11).*

Here the schools' staff and peers who label these families as Jews engendered self-awareness and 'appropriate' action.

It appears that no school offered a safe path that would enable these families to raise a Jewish secular youngster in London. Non-Jewish schools did not necessarily result in the weakening of the child's religious identities, while the socialisation in Jewish schools often resulted either in enhancement or weakening of the child's religious identification and level of religiosity. As noted earlier, these experiences were recurrently discussed in the choice process, leading some families to unambiguous decisions, with some rejecting one type of schools or the other.

The findings presented here highlight three points: firstly, in line with other migration studies, the second generation do not share their parents' strong national identities, religious identification or ethnic practices and tend to realise identities that represent both their new national membership and their parents' ancestry, adopting either a dual-national definition - British-Israeli, or one national identity – either the Israeli or the British solely. Secondly, both the children as well as the adults developed a Jewish identity, but mostly with little changes in their religious practices. Thirdly, the children's attachments to the ethnic community were also less likely to be as strong as their parents'. These identifications engendered two different school choice patterns: the devotees exhibited a strong believe that communal schools could counter some of the ambiguities of their children's identifications by linking them more tightly to their compatriots, and by creating a sheltered ethnic arena where their homeland national identities, their language skills and secular religious identification combined. Further, because their children no longer mingled solely with their co-nationals, they believed that communal schools in effect offered an amicable path between the cultures, enabling them to maintain their identities and cultural heritage, and at the same time allowing them the experience of outer-group associations and exposure to other cultures. Non-conformists on the other hand, were less concerned with the indistinctness of their children's national, ethnic or religious identities, as they aimed for schools that they believed would strengthen and support their children's middle-class dispositions.

Comparative pause: on detachment

In the previous section on detached choosers I delineated their information gathering practices and market tactics, suggesting that both the embedded and detached veteran choosers were competent educational consumers. I also argued that the main differences between the detached and embedded choosers were in their classification schemes and considerations.

In analysing the detached parents' criteria for the assessment of schools the common denominator between the detached and the embedded occurred in the

form of their middle-class dispositions: both groups focused on the **academic aspect** as well as its **social mix.** However, while the embedded choosers were preoccupied with the school's academic spirit this was not mentioned by detached parents as a criterion. On the other hand, the **school's learning environment** was mentioned with the 'orderliness', 'structure' and the 'organisation' of the school as a learning environment being the centre of discussion and this was often intermixed with the **school's discipline.** The general tendency among the detached parents was to choose schools 'that take learning seriously', 'that make them learn properly' and that are 'quite strict' but 'they need to be, after all they are teenagers'. **The school's achievements** was also mentioned, and similar to the embedded choosers exam results did play a part in appraising schools, but they were rarely of paramount importance. However, there was a notion of 'prestige' that appeared in some accounts, and the percentage of graduates continuing to prominent schools or universities, was looked at as a serious indication of the schools' achievements, as one mother noted: 'from that school the door opens directly to Oxbridge'. The **school's curriculum** did not appear in any account as a criterion. Unlike embedded choosers, but similar to Ball's (2003a) middle-class choosers, most of the detached choosers perceived **state schools** and **comprehensive schools** with some reservation and mistrust and treated **private schools** as their 'expected route', with parents referring to their own and their familial private school traditions as a point of reference (Noden, West, David and Edge 1998). This may also explain why the pupils' demeanour and appearance (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Ball 1997) was not mentioned by these respondents: most of the visits they have conducted were to private schools.

The second array of assessment criteria mentioned by these parents included the **schools' intake**. Here there were striking differences between the detached and the embedded: the **'social issue'** did not appear in the detached accounts as a consideration. However, the impact of social mix on the schools' environment and the child's **achievements** was mentioned albeit faintly, which may be due either to politically correctness, or to the fact that the schools they were visiting were fairly homogeneous in terms of intake. While the embedded

choosers pursuit of a middle-class setting was obscured by the search for the 'right' ethnic, racial and religion mix, with the parents attempting to avoid schools 'where he will be the only minority', the detached did not voice such concerns, nor a concern for an anti-semitic environment. Further, they often opted for schools that embedded choosers defined as 'too posh', 'with no minorities'.

To conclude, in their search for a school with a corresponding academic habitus, the detached parents used a set of criteria that would facilitate their efforts in finding schools that were likely to serve their cultural reproduction endeavours in the class sense. In contrast to the embedded choosers, their minority ethnic background did not affect their decisions.

An analysis of the detached parents' national identities has demonstrated that like the embedded parents, they revealed a strong sense of Israeli identity, but most perceiving themselves also as British:

> *Sima: I am married to a British Christian person. So I do see myself as both British and Israeli. My kids are British in all senses of the word. They do not see themselves as Israeli (Interview no. 43).*

As the quote indicates, the findings relating to the children's identities among detached families, suggest that the children growing up in dual-heritage homes and away from the ethnic community developed a British identity. Parallel to the embedded choosers, the detached also reported that their Jewish identity has strengthened but reported of no changes in their religious practices. However, their children's Jewish identities also shifted, either becoming stronger or weaker as a result of their engagements with 'others' at the schools. Some parents shared the embedded parents' concerns that being secular as they were, meant that they were 'unable to teach the kids anything about Judaism'. Nevertheless, they did not opt for Jewish schools (mostly because there was no Jewish school in a reasonable distance). Instead, some employed tutors or send their children to the local synagogue classes on weekends.

As for their ethno-linguistic identities, most did not speak Hebrew with partners or with the children:

> *Carmela: With Adam I tried to speak Hebrew but it was too awkward and when the other two came a long, we all switched to English (Interview no. 49).*

Evidently, both the parents and the children had few or no social ties with Israelis, and most of their ties were with non-Jews:

> *Carmela: My best friend is a colleague that I have worked with who knows how many years, and she is Christian, and was born here, and every year we go to them for Christmas and they come to us for Rosh Hashana or Pessah. Most of our ties are, well I don't know, all sorts, Jews, non-Jews, lots of psychologists (colleagues RH). Very few Israelis.*
> *Rona: And what about the kids?*
> *Carmela: Same here. Friends from the school, the football club, a few from the street (Interview no. 49).*

The findings presented here highlight one point: in comparison to the embedded choosers, the choice process of the detached was free of an ethnic, national or religious dimension, and both children and parents formed strong ties with non-ethnics and developed a sense of British identity. The comparison between the groups shows clearly the force of the ethnic community in inhibiting assimilation, as in its absence, both the parents' generation and the children were much more fully integrated in their host culture.

Homing devices

In this section I shall bring together the findings presented in this chapter on embedded choosers attempting to highlight the socialising aspect of their social networks, and mainly that of the ethnic community.

In the previous chapters I explored the various aspects of the respondents' networks and placed the ethnic community at the centre of my investigation. The findings suggest that the ethnic community fulfilled different roles for each group of choosers. The role that the ethnic community assumed for international choosers was that of transit platform, a meso level structure that mediated between public and private domains, that eased the transition between their old and new lives by helping them reconstruct of their cognitive capacities. For the

newcomers, the ethnic meso-level formation emerged in the schooling arena, as certain schools transformed into and functioned as ethnic organisations, that operated as doorways to the ethnic community. Here the ethnic community mediated between public and private sites and also functioned as a cultural and psychological comfort zone, where these new migrants could maintain their life style and culture and develop their ethnicity. For both the newly arrived groups, the ethnic community served as an intervening structure that directed them into its sites, and encouraged them to assume membership in it. This was where the power and authority the ethnic community had over of the respondents' lives became visible. For the veterans whose experiences were explored in this chapter, the role of the ethnic community is more elusive, perhaps because they themselves were 'the ethnic community'. Here the ethnic community's roles surfaced in their reports regarding their information gathering practices, in their deliberations over their considerations for choice and the importance of the presence of their compatriots in the chosen schools, and in their discussions regarding their own identities. In these domains, the socialising function of ethnic community featured, albeit subtly, and I shall attempt to unpack and illuminate these here.

With reference to the socialisation function of the ethnic community two points should be made from the outset: firstly, the socialising function of the ethnic community refers both to its anthropological 'in-between' culture and to its class aspect. Secondly, the main mechanism by which the socialisation function operated, especially for the veteran group analysed here, was role-modelling. My argument here, builds on Coleman's (1988) notion that social capital manifests itself in the form of social norms, and contends that the families' embeddedness in the community and their exposure to a tightly-knit network, meant that their own life choices and behaviours were influenced by the values and norms that prevailed in the community and other people's behaviours and life choices.

To further unpack the socialising function of the ethnic community I shall address two of its aspects: human capital and ethnic capital. **Human capital**

refers to the knowledge, abilities and skills that individuals acquire through formal and informal education, training and experience (Coleman 1988). The human capital of a group is the aggregation of the cultural capital of its members (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). For the particular group of migrants studied here, the essence of their human capital is their middle-class resources.

Ethnic capital is a group resource that consists of a whole set of ethnic characteristics – culture, language, attitudes, and economic opportunities that members of a particular ethnic group share (Borjas 1999). Both the ethnic and the human capitals are types of social capital since they are transmitted from one member to another through social networks (Coleman 1988; Borjas 1992). Their significance among immigrants lies in the re-socialisation process of newly arrived immigrants, and in their intergenerational transmission function in relation to children: they define the cultural environment that adult newcomers and children are exposed to and the set of opportunities that are available to them as a result of their ethnic ties.

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that the community described here functioned as an incubator for its ethnic and human capitals by assuming its re-socialisation and intergenerational transmission functions. As I have illustrated earlier, the ethnic community provided the adults and the children with a close-knit network with which they could interact regularly and intimately, thereby learning from each other, influencing each other's behaviour, and transmitting valuable information through social webs that make up their ethnic grapevine. Through these practices they also communicated the distinct values and norms that make up the ethnic culture, thereby reinventing its features.

Borjas (1999) depicts the ways in which community members affect each other's lives, as 'spill-over effect': this happens when a decision that people in the community make – such as how much schooling to attain, or which schools to enrol in, 'spills over' and affects others. Because of the close ties in ethnic groups, ethnicity has a spillover effect on the opportunities that are open to people in that group and their achievements. This type of spillover effect was revealed in the parents' delineation of their landscapes of choice, which was

circumscribed by their compatriots' educational experiences even among the non-conformists who openly admitted that they wished to escape the 'herd pattern'.

In their examination of the socialising effects of ethnic communities, especially with regards to the children's schooling Bankston, Caldas and Zhou (1997) define 'ethnicity as social capital' and argue that community relations that surround children are a form of investment that can influence the children's performance. Coleman (1988) clarifies that this effect can occur through the values and norms that prevail in such communities. Portes and McLeod (1996a) maintain that the children's success may be attributed to parental and community's aspirations and pressure on children to adhere to these values and norms. In this manner the ethnic capital of the immigrant community can support the accumulation of its human capital (Coleman 1988; Portes and McLeod 1996a ; Borjas 1992). Borjas (1999) argues that children's exposure to an advantaged ethnic environment, in the sense that it has abundant human capital, can positively influence the children, while exposure to a disadvantaged environment can hinder their achievements. As seen here, the choice process revealed the 'parental pressure' to aim high, as they searched for schools that would match these values and support their middle-class as well as ethnic cultural reproduction efforts. Thus, I would argue that the middle-class cultural capital of the ethnic community studied here has become an input in itself, exposing both the adults and the children to an environment that motivated them to acquire the skills that were needed to compete in the educational marketplace, to enrol their children in high performing schools, to excel once enrolled, and to aspire for progression into higher education. These middle-class norms, and more importantly, the associated skills and credentials, also enable a more direct route for the integration of the second generation in the receiving society (Portes and McLeod 1996a).

While the ethnic community's human capital provided a middle-class environment that engendered a 'push' towards high-performing schools, its ethnic capital engendered a 'pull' in a different direction: to communal schools.

Borjas (1999) argues that 'ethnic capital creates a type of stickiness in the process of social mobility, making it difficult for persons in ethnic groups to move up' (p. 14). Indeed, this type of 'stickiness' was exposed in this group's reports where their ethnic and human capitals clashed, and where their minority status encouraged them to follow the communal pattern of schooling, pulling them away from other schools, and leading to the continuation of their clustering in education. Borjas (1999) further maintains: 'because the children of particular ethnic groups tend to follow in the *group's* footsteps, ethnic capital effectively lowers the flame under the melting pot from a full boil to a slow simmer. In a sense, ethnic capital makes it hard to escape the economic fate implied by one's ethnic background' (p. 14). Indeed, as the findings demonstrate, ethnic clustering can slow the integration of the second generation into their host's culture.

In conclusion, this group's embeddedness meant that they were subjected to their community's socialisation function, especially at the time they were choosing their children's schools, coming face to face with the conflict embodied in their middle-class human capital and their ethnic capital. Here the school choice process entailed a choice between two socialisation agents: one which left the school as the main socialisation agent, and the other, obtainable through communal schools, in which the school and the community's socialising function operated in tandem.

And finally...

This chapter charted the narratives of veteran immigrant families as they raise a second generation of immigrant children in London and as they engage and negotiate with the educational marketplace in their locality. At the centre of the analysis were the embedded choosers, and their interaction with the competitive marketplace, as it was perceived from their positions as middle-class parents and members of a minority ethnic group, and visualised through their particular 'in-between' ethnic cultural lens.

The story began with their embedded knowledge, that which was gleaned from the ethnic grapevine, and concluded with their decision-making, demonstrating the centrality of their identities in the choice process. The story followed these families as they, in partnership with their ethnic grapevine, constructed a vision of their reality, within which the choice of socialisation agent was intermixed with their own membership in the ethnic community, engendering particular visions and expectations from their children as middle-class young people and as ethnic beings.

At the centre of the chronicle presented in this chapter, stood the ethnic community, delineated here through its shared stance, cooperative action, and its ethic culture. The report went on to examine the ways in which this ethnic culture, with its particular lenses and preferences and interpretation of reality, guarded and confined the families' choice process and their decisions, leading to the reproduction of an approved ethnic path which merged their ethnic identification with and their class stance. Throughout the chapter the clashes between their middle-class and ethnicity were exposed, demonstrating the awkward positioning of this group in the educational marketplace, and the risks entailed in cultural reproduction of minority ethnic groups, both in the class and the ethnic sense.

The findings suggest that while the ethnic community was at the centre of the parents' existence, affecting their thinking and actions, the children drifted away both from their parents' emotive sense of identification with their homeland, and from their ethnicity, to carve their own identities and sense of belonging. While these families may not be able to fully manage their children's integration process in the host culture, which seemed to occur through the chosen schools, they were able to bequeath to their children their middle-class positioning with its typical visions and expectations.

The school-choice storyline offered here revealed one simple but highly poignant factor that seems to drive the school choice agenda: the search for identity, sense of place, and the quest for closure. Whether parents chose

schools that matched their class standing or ethnic identification, they were choosing 'a definite form of boundary maintenance, of closure' (Ball 2003a: 160), that offered some assurances of social reproduction.

The group of immigrants described here, may be unique in the sense that their socialisation journey is a distinct one, and so are their identifications and concerns, and perhaps the emergence of certain schools as ethnic organisations may seem uncommon. However, their stories accentuate and thus bring into vision what lies hidden behind the schooling agenda in multi-cultural London: the ways in which the mechanisms of the market serve to transform schools from cohesive forces, and potential mainstreaming mechanisms for immigrant families, into class or ethnic fortresses that engender segregation.

11. Choosing Schools – An Exercise in Market Fitness?

Critical capitals

The main theme underlying the division of the respondents into the groups presented earlier, was their skills and resources as choosers; or as the title of this chapter proposes: their 'market-fitness'. In this chapter I shall present an analysis of eight types of capitals that have emerged in the data as the primary capacities and resources that these families drew on as they engaged with the education market in their localities. These were: **cultural properties**, **social resources**, **identities, symbolic assets, psychological empowerment**, **cognitive capacities, economic means** and **statutory positioning**. In the research findings chapters I have illustrated the ways in which these resources were utilised by the respondents when available, and how they affected their lives when in dearth. My main aim here is to summarise the research findings developmentally, to organise and structure the research findings and locate them into their theoretical context.

Cultural properties

One of the most conspicuous characteristics of the respondents' narratives was the abundance of cultural themes: the accounts were literally bustling with cultural emblems and their imprints, and accordingly cultural motifs assumed central stage in the analyses displayed here. However, in this study, culture was not only a phenomenon to be examined and explained, but also, an analytic tool that was used to investigate and deconstruct the educational issues examined.

To unpack the concept of culture I shall firstly refer to the basic distinction between two types of cultural properties: culture in the anthropological sense (Geertz 1973), which is envisaged as a shared way of life among a particular

group of people, and cultural capital in the Bourdian sense, which encompasses universal differences between social classes (Bourdieu 1986b). In the interview texts, these two types of culture intertwined and often manifested themselves as a compound. However, in the developmental analysis the two began to surface as separate themes. At times, they emerged as different tunes in what were 'cultural hymns' underlying the texts, and in other accounts, the two types of cultural properties emerged as distinct lyrics.

The previous analyses demonstrated that all three groups of choosers were affected, albeit in different ways, by the cultural lenses (national / ethnic) through which they perceived their local education market and their children's educational route, and by the cultural resources (class based) that framed and informed their decision-making at every stage of the choice process. In comparing these groups the first theme that came to light was that of **cultural transferability**: while cultural capital – particularly middle-class cultural capital - that is based on universally accepted educational and occupational credentials, seems to be transportable across national borders, the national culture was clearly less transferable, and thus, it was in the anthropological cultural domain that the intercultural adaptation process occurred, while the class cultural capital remained fairly sound. Each family and each individual in this study has experienced the intercultural adaptation process (Kim 1989), as part of a movement from a cultural arena that was habituated in the homeland national culture, to a bifurcated cultural setting – the host society's culture – the British or London culture, and the ethnic / immigrant community's culture. Throughout this process, the choosers' middle-class cultural capital remained fairly unchanged. As noted earlier, most of the respondents were middle-class and their international relocation movement took them into a foreign cultural terrain, yet slotted them into class circuits similar to the ones from which they emerged.

This highlights the second cultural theme that emerged in this study, that I have called '**offsetting**': the capacity of the choosers' middle-class cultural capital to compensate for the mismatches and omissions occurring from the displacement of their anthropological culture. Earlier I cited Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe's (1994)

argument that immigrant parents engaging with the education market may find themselves stranded and unable to manoeuvre in the marketplace, since their cultural capital is 'in the wrong currency'. 'The right currency' may be characterised as middle-class (and certainly British). Indeed, as Ball (2003a) explains, education policies in Britain, are aimed at 'satisfying the concerns and interests of the middle-class' (p. 25), and thus middle-class parents are particularly skilled in operating the mechanisms of the education market. For the parents who took part in this study the characterisation of 'having a cultural capital in the wrong currency', is inaccurate or incomplete: indeed their national culture was of the wrong sort, and acquiring the properties of a new culture was a slow process, yet, as their narratives demonstrated, there were occasions in which these parents were able to utilise the properties and dispositions of their class to counterbalance their deficit in British cultural capacities. In a way, they have found an exchange formula, where their internationally accepted currency could compensate for the lack of local funds. However, there were also some occasions when particular aspects of their national or ethnic vision outweighed their middle-class capacities.

The international choosers found that their class cultural capital was 'over-whelmed' not only by their lack of British cultural properties, but also by their own national cultural 'baggage' which was imported from the homeland. Nevertheless, their fundamental understanding of the ways in which markets operate, their initial disposition towards investment in education, which are typically middle-class thinking, were all in operation. More importantly, as their stories illustrated, this group utilised their migration networks in ways that enabled them to counterbalance some of these initial cultural deficits. The newcomers were in a different position than that of international choosers, and were able to utilise their class cultural assets to some degree, although their poor knowledge of the host culture and the utilisation of their homeland assessment schemes indeed hampered their choice process. However, what the stories of this group of choosers underlined were the ways in which their social capital – especially their ethnic capital, intertwined with their cultural orientation and compensated, to some degree, for their other cultural 'deficits'.

The veterans displayed the use of middle-class resources and dispositions to the fullest extent: their anthropological cultural properties were no longer an obstacle as their adaptation process had brought them to the point where they could comfortably function in the British cultural domain. For this group, the impact of the anthropological culture was manifested through their ethnic affiliation and the interpretation of their circumstances through an ethnic cultural lens. Here the interaction between the choosers' ethnic culture and their middle-classness manifested itself most clearly, with each of them generating a pull in a different direction: while the choosers' class resources seemed to widen the choosers' horizons for action (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997), their ethnic lens seemed to tighten them.

In the analyses presented earlier I have fragmented 'culture' into its two aspects in order to demonstrate the ways in which the anthropological and the class aspects interplayed. The fragmentation of the concept of culture also enabled to bring together the two strands of research that this dissertation draws upon: migration research with its anthropological cultural conceptions (Gold 2002; Adler 1987; Alba and Nee 1997; Borjas 1995; Cohen 1999), and the writings on school choice most of which build on and develop Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu 1986a; 1990; Bourdieu and Boltanski 2000; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) on cultural reproduction in education.

The third cultural theme that featured in the respondents' accounts was their **cross-cultural adaptation process**. The transformation that occurred in the families' anthropological culture embodied three processes: their disengagement from the homeland culture, the learning of and adaptation to the host culture, and the emergence of a third culture in their thinking as a way of life: their ethnic culture. The homeland culture was the main cultural lens that these adult migrants utilised at the point of relocation and for some years afterwards. However, with the passage of time they acquired and adapted to the host culture, a process that often required re-learning and de-learning of their original culture. Further, the distance from the homeland occasioned a slow disengagement from its culture since they could not accustom themselves

to the developments that occurred in their native culture in their absence, and thus, they lose their in-depth knowledge and their 'mastery' of that culture. Nevertheless, it continues to live in their memories, as it was on the day of their migration. In a sense, each adult migrant carries with him in his mind an outdated 'version' of the native culture that was 'frozen' at the time of his relocation (Gaine and George 1999).

The host culture, its language, norms and values, is slowly acquired through immigrants' engagement with host society members, and their cross-cultural adaptation process (Kim 1989; Grinberg and Grinberg 1989; Adler 1987). However, while immigrant children face a relatively systematic, developmental, age-related process of re-socialisation, and engage on a daily basis with their main socialisation agent (the school), the adults' adaptation process is rarely an orderly or gradual learning experience, and often results in an incoherent, fragmented and incomplete impression of the host culture. Adler (1987) argues that the cross-cultural adaptation process occurs in parallel to their disengagement from their homeland culture, leading to the development of a bi-cultural position where they can cognitively situate themselves between the two cultures being neither totally a part of any of them, nor totally apart from either of them. However, this may mean that they do not master either culture.

The 'third culture', in which most (but not all) respondents in this study are embedded, is the ethnic culture. While the common reasoning holds that immigrant-founded ethnic communities 'import' their native culture into their new settings, my observation of the ethnic community suggests that its cultural features are different from that of the homeland and can be more aptly defined as an 'in-between' culture (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996b). Tilly (1990) acknowledges that ethnic communities do not fully maintain the original cultural patterns of the homeland and that 'wholesale transplantation' is rare even among first generation immigrants. Waldinger and Bozorgmehr (1996b) suggest that even if the ethnic community is relatively secluded from the host society, its members' cross cultural adaptation process continues, since the community itself transforms and adjusts to some extent in response to external

requirements and pressures. With each succeeding generation the ethnic community moves further and further away from the values, orientation, and identities of their ancestors, reinventing their ethnicity (Bhabha 1996). Pre-immigration cultural characteristics are different from ethnic cultures, since immigrants tend to select carefully not only what to pack to bring to their destination country, but also what to unpack once settled. Some cultural norms and values may be consistent with the host culture. Others are often negotiated, modified, changed or reformed. Immigrants collectively adjust to the host society, reproducing or reinventing a new culture (Bhabha 1996). This collective adaptation occurs because some of the networks in the community are linked with and often integrated within the host society; their members must adapt to some extent, to the customs and habits of the host society in order to function (Tilly 1990; Waldinger 1995).

However, Waldinger (1996b) argues that there are some features that can slow down the collective adaptation process. Communities that can easily access their homelands, those who maintain active links with the native land, and ethnic communities that encounter large migration flows from the homeland and high return rates, often experience a relatively slower pace of adaptation. This process is even more prevalent among ethnic communities where a large proportion of their members regard themselves as temporary sojourners (Lopez 1996; Waldinger 1996b). This suggests that the community studied here may experience a relatively slow adaptation process.

In the findings chapters the three cultures described here appeared at various points along the school choice process. The 'in-between' ethnic culture was particularly important in understanding the significance of the ethnic community in its members' lives and its impact on the school choice process. As the findings demonstrated, the ethnic culture has become a lens through which they made sense of their lives and their circumstances. This ethnic lens coloured their understandings and their assessments of schools and became a starting point for action in the educational arena.

Social resources

In the introduction I reviewed the principles and constituents of social resources, bringing together different strands of social capital research and migration network analysis (Coleman 1988; Bourdieu 1986b; Burt 2000; Putnam 2000; Sabar 2000; Gold, 2002; Light and Gold 2000; Portes 1998; Portes and Landolt 1996; Borjas 1995; Faist 2000). The focus of this study on culture has generated one persistent theme that dominated the stories of the families interviewed here: the presence and roles of what Massey (1988) defines as 'migration networks'. The transcripts were literally saturated with evidence of the interviewees' social networks, and almost every anecdote, report, observation, tale or inquiry, offered insights into the workings of these international webs of ties and their impact on the lives of adults and children. At the centre of this analysis stood the immigrant / ethnic community with its cohesive communal bonds and its distinct culture. Paradoxically, even the accounts of the detached families, who by choice or chance led their lives away from the immigrant community, were sprinkled with observations, queries and predicaments arising from the lack or scarcity of communal ties. Indeed, social ties, and their centrality in the lives of these immigrant families, featured as the major cultural mark of this group. Analysing the school choice process has brought to light sets of interpersonal relationships that linked these immigrant families with returnees and non-immigrants in the homeland and enabled them to bond with their compatriots in the host country, through ties of kinship, friendship, and communal affiliation (Massey 1988).

The social capital metaphor delineates a market arena, where individuals and groups that are highly connected, that is, have social capital of a particular kind, fair better in their transactions, in the sense that receive higher returns on their efforts, and are thus more able to achieve their goals (Burt 2000). In light of this metaphor I have explored in the findings chapters seven dimensions of social networks, aiming to gain a better understanding how social capital was utilised as a resource. These were:

1. **The structural characteristics**: details the composition of a network, that a group or an individual has access to, such as its size, density, location, the strength of the ties involved, etc.

2. **The positioning of individuals in the network**: delineates the families' access to various networks, their positioning (centrality / marginality) within those webs of ties, and the power incurred as a result of their positions.

3. **The productivity of the network**: defines the gains or assets secured through social relationships, such as: information, knowledge, advice, support, protection, etc. This dimension offered an insight into the ways in which social capital works; how relationships transform into other resources, thus enabling the networked parties to pursue their ends.

4. **The networks' norms of reciprocity**: following Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000) definitions, this dimension centred on the norms that governed the ties being examined, and defined these in terms of their reliability, dependency, trustworthiness, commitment, generosity, care, concern, etc.

5. **Membering**: the ways in which networks can give rise to their members' sense of belonging and engender group cohesion.

6. **Socialisation**: this dimension explored the ways in which this community engendered its members' collective identities, and led to the emergence and maintenance of the group's culture.

7. **Network force**: in the last dimension displayed in the findings chapters, social networks came to life to illustrate the ways in which networks intervene in and influence their members' lives.

The comparison of the three groups of choosers has shown that each group occupied a different position within the communal web, both in terms of their access to others and the roles they assumed towards each other: international choosers and newcomers were relatively marginal, that is, their social capital was limited, and they were situated on the receiving side of the relationship equation. Veterans, on the other hand, were positioned centrally on both the local and international communal webs, and thus their social capital was substantial, and could be easily enlarged. Furthermore, they functioned as social resources to others by positioning themselves on the giving side of the fellowship formula. The transcripts provided ample of examples of the ways in which migration networks supported newly arriving immigrants. The most frequently quoted type of support was the provision of information, advice and help in a variety of domains, including education. As illustrated, there were times where these ties assumed a crucial role in reducing the costs of migration and cultural marginality. At these moments, veterans assumed a carer function by becoming brokers of information and support for their newly arriving compatriots.

The findings suggest that migration networks, and especially those established locally with compatriots, directly affect the educational patterns of this immigrant group, by promoting transitions to communal schools, and by discouraging movements to other schools. These networks were capable of advancing movement to particular institutions, by offering information about these schools, and by linking prospective families to those already attending these schools. This networking-enterprise often occurred across international borders. In doing this, the veteran families in this study assumed a 'gate-keeping' function that served to reproduce the existing communal patterns of schooling, while newcomers were positioned on the receiving end.

The findings suggest that similar to the ways in which chain migration occurs (Faist 2000) clustering in education emerges when a steady pattern of movement is established, leading families to specific schools, and encouraging

newcomers to follow a path well-worn by early arrivals. More importantly, one the main research findings in this study shows, that by promoting concentration in particular schools, these networks provided the basis for community formation in the immigration area, while these community schools were embraced and consequently functioned as ethnic institutions.

Concentration in education was indeed a primary factor in the formation of the researched community. The findings also indicate that clustering was both a pre-condition and a result of community formation. A primary aspect of ethnic clustering is the creation of ethnic spaces, where members of the community can meet, engage in cultural and social activities and speak their own language. The transcripts provided many examples of the ways in which the favoured schools functioned as ethnic spaces.

However, as Cornell and Hartmann (1998) argue, once immigrant communities are established, they affect their members' lives and particularly their re-socialisation process. As the analyses illustrated, the immigrant community exerted its own conformity pressure, creating expectations that members would align themselves with established educational practices and contribute to the maintenance of its members' identities. This socialising aspect was of particular importance, as it highlighted the ways in which the community's ethnic capital functioned as a collective resource leading to the intergenerational reproduction of the group's human capital (Coleman 1988).

The summary offered here highlights the centrality of social capital in determining the educational route these families followed. Issues of identity – national, ethnic and religious - emerged in this study as a construct that tied between the group's cultural properties and its social resources.

Identities

On the most basic level, group identities, whether national, ethnic, religious, racial or other, are formed (or transformed) as a result of people's association or affiliation with particular individuals, groups or collectives, and involve self-

consciousness and self-ascription: an acknowledgement of one's membership or association with the group and an awareness of the group's distinctiveness by members themselves (Hall 1996). In addition, national, ethnic, religious and some racial identities are rooted in specific cultures (Grosberg 1996; Razool 1997). Thus, the social ties that individuals possess, together with the culture within which these networks are rooted, are the foundation from which these identities can emerge, and at the same time, a product of these identities.

Much of the literature on identity, particularly within the framework of immigration and ethnicity, centres on the external forces affecting individuals' identities (Cornell and Hartmann 1998; Portes and McLeod 1996b; Rambaut 1994; Waters 1990; Gold 2002). These 'external' or 'situational' factors may be anything from state policies to social ties. The assumption is that international relocation involves significant changes in people's circumstances, and that these changes, particularly in the social and cultural environments, are followed by a re-socialisation process which eventually leads to reconstruction of one's identities. Immigrants' identities transform because of the changes they experience in their social positions: for many immigrants, international relocation means a movement from a position of power, that of 'the native', to being 'an alien', 'a stranger' or 'an outsider', and from being a member of the majority or the dominant group to being a member of a minority, ethnic or racial groups. This suggests that identities are strategic, positional and dynamic (Hall 1996; Modood, Beiston and Virdee 1994).

Immigrants' identities are constructed or reinvented in the interaction between external forces and the ways in which individuals and groups perceive and represent themselves (Hall 1996). Cornell and Hartmann (1998) explain:

> The process of construction is an interactive one. Identities are made, by an interaction between the circumstantial or human assignment on one hand and assertion on the other. Construction involves both the passive experience of being 'made' by external forces, including not only material circumstances but the claims that other persons or groups make about

> the group in question, and the active process by which the group 'makes' itself (p. 70).

Cornell and Hartmann (1998) further maintain that immigrants' identities are altered because they encounter a new 'classification scheme', within which they are classified by natives as a minority ethnic or racial group. These 'classification schemes' make use of racial, ethnic or religious labels that are available in the public realm (Bacon 1999). Immigrants respond to these labels by adopting or rejecting them and the concomitant positions that the host society assigns them. Those who adopt the host society's classification scheme, often come to see themselves in terms of the labels that are assigned to them by others. Others reject these imposed identities and seek to present and identify themselves in different terms.

Further, individuals are actively involved not only the construction of their own identities, but in the construction of boundaries between groups that ultimately define other people's identities:

> Cultural identity is a matter of contrast. To claim an ethnic identity is to distinguish ourselves from others. It is to draw a boundary between 'us and them'. An ethnic group cannot exist in isolation. It has meaning only in a context that involves others (Cornell and Hartmann 1998: p. 20).

Hall (1996) explains that Identities emerge within specific power relations, where presentation and marking of difference and exclusion occur. This emphasises the fluid, dynamic and situated nature of identities:

> identities are never unified, and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are constantly in the process of change and transformation (Hall 1996: 4).

Most importantly, Cornell and Hartmann's (1998) analysis highlights the impact of ethnic identities on the lives immigrants and their descendants. Ethnic identities have exceptional power over individuals because they involve a

cognitive scheme, that is, a cultural perspective through which the world is interpreted:

> Once established, an ethnic or racial identity becomes a lens through which people interpret and make sense of the world around them. [Thus,] ethnic and racial identities can be significant forces in their own right. Although circumstances can construct identities, identities are capable of reconstructing circumstances (Cornell and Hartmann 1998: 94-95).

Cornell and Hartman (1998) define various 'construction sites' within which identity construction occurs. These sites are spaces where individuals or groups meet, either with members of their own group or with others and negotiate their positions and identities. The construction (or reinvention) of identities takes place in the interaction between the opportunities and constraints that group members encounter in these sites, and what they bring to that encounter. Education is indeed one of the main construction sites within which identities are moulded. As I have sought to demonstrate (and will return to later), the question of who goes to the school, in terms of ethnic and social mix, are of particular significance to the group of families studied here, as this will influence the children's identities.

The analyses presented earlier revealed several aspects of the respondents' identities and exposed a circular link between the choosers' identities and their choice of school; the educational decision-making of choosers were clearly affected by their identities and their relative position on the transformation curve, and in turn, their educational route affected the children's and the adults' identities, both through the socialising aspect of the formal schooling process, and through their informal engagement with the schools' networks. As noted, some schools became 'ethnic spaces' and thus functioned as 'incubators' for the group's ethnic identity.

In comparing the three groups of choosers their different identities emerged in relation to their positioning on the cross-cultural adaptation process: the international choosers and their children displayed a strong Israeli national

identity, and (with the exception of few families) a strong secular identity, and these clearly affected their educational decisions. The second group of choosers, the newcomers, were at the peak of their cross-cultural adaptation process, where their homeland national identity began to weaken, yet, they have not developed a British identity, and their ethnic identity was beginning to emerge. Their accounts revealed that their emerging ethnic affiliation often led them to follow the communal path, which in turn, strengthened their ethnic identities and slowed their cross-cultural adaptation process. The veterans, were in a different state: most parents retained their homeland identities, and developed a strong sense of belonging to the ethnic group, but only few developed a sense of British identity. In addition, some have experienced changes in their religious identities. The children however, differed from their parents, and often displayed a sense of belonging to both countries, their affiliation to the ethnic community was not as strong as their parents', and some also developed distinct religious identities. In contrast to the other groups, in the veterans' decision making process, identity issues took central stage: they were aware of the impact schooling may have on their children's identities and indeed took some measures to channel their children into the desired position.

Symbolic assets

Communication skills are a central component of the individual's symbolic capital, as well as social capital, and a vital factor in gaining personal and social autonomy. Language and more specifically, the ability to communicate in the second language in different situations is traditionally regarded as a critical factor in promoting immigrants' adaptation, and indeed can become a substantial hurdle when in deficit (Ting-Toomey 1989; Fairclough 1989).

The most obvious theme emerging from the data, relating the families' symbolic resources to the choice process was the **significance of linguistic skills** and the families' relative skill or deficiency in that domain. In many interviews and observations parents described some of difficulties they encountered throughout the choice process as a result of their lack of fluency in English. As

might be expected, newcomers' proficiency in English was inferior to that of veterans, and presented difficulties within their process of choice. Veterans, on the other hand, have reached a higher degree of language proficiency, hence, these subgroups experienced the school choice process differently.

Another aspect of linguistic skills that emerged from the analyses was the concept of **'discourse'** (Foucault 1981). Ting-Toomey (1989) argues that in the process of language socialisation, individuals do not learn language per se, rather, they learn to master the various standards and modes of verbal interaction, that enable them to function in different situations. They acquire the appropriate discourses and learn 'to play by the rules' of a given cultural milieu. The findings indicated that the newcomers' choice process was encumbered both by their lack of English fluency as well as inability to master the local discourses, including those utilised in the education market. Veterans have mastered both the language and the appropriate discourses and thus were able to fully engage in the market contest.

However, English proficiency (or deficiency) was but one aspect of the families' symbolic assets displayed in the educational marketplace. The second was the **'communal function'** of communication, that is, the ways in which the respondents' use of their first language, worked as a means of uniting individuals into a community of shared culture and collective identity, and the role of the home language in the reinvention of their ethnic culture and ethnolinguistic identity (Ting-Toomey 1989). The analyses displayed the ways in which language was used to create, affirm and negotiate these cultural properties and shared identities. Language emerged in the interviewees' accounts as a mechanism that united these families, but at the same time, worked to erect and mark social and cultural barriers between group members and others (Fairclough 1989). The 'us and them' discourse was especially explicit in the newcomer group's schooling discourse, and was indeed one of their main boundary construction mechanisms.

Going back to my earlier distinction between the anthropological cultural

resources of the group and their class cultural capital, the analysis of language skills among these middle-class immigrants, reiterates that division. Listening to their voices, indeed brought to light not only their homeland and ethnic tattle, but also their **middle-class** chatter: its underlying air of confidence, self-assurance, determination, authority, control and strength, their distinct sense of humour, their ability to articulate their narratives in a thoughtful yet reflective way, that is measured and mindful, candid and intimate. They have discussed their lives in ways that emphasised their analytic thinking, and demonstrated depth and sophistication, and clearly, as Ball (2003a) notes, they got things done through communication with individuals and organisations around them.

In the presentation of the research findings, I have highlighted four aspects of their symbolic assets, and demonstrated how language and discourse affected the choosers negotiation with schools, the ways in which the evaluation and decision making process was inflicted by their communal discourse, and at times, I highlighted their middle-class forms and registers.

Economic means

Material assets are undoubtedly the most immediate factor affecting families as they negotiate with the education market. As the findings illustrated, these means had a crucial impact on the abilities of choosers to manoeuvre in the marketplace since they placed within the families' reach options and opportunities that the majority of children growing up in Britain have no access to. The importance of material resources went beyond the ability to ensure access to educational assets, such as fee-paying schools, tutors, or the ability to buy educational paraphernalia (computers, books, stationary, etc.). In the education marketplace, the ability to rent or buy housing in close proximity to a desired school, to afford transportation costs or supply transportation means, to hire child care, to offer children informal out-of-school activities, to access essential information – were all important in determining the positioning of the families in their local educational arena.

In comparing the material resources available to each group of choosers, it became evident that international choosers utilised their financial resources in the educational marketplace to a lesser degree in comparison to other groups. The evidence does not suggest that this was due to different financial capabilities. There were, however, indications that this was mainly a result of the families' migratory circumstances, and their inclination to prioritise financial investments in education, at different stages of their immigration journey. Issues of transferability of both economic assets and life styles across borders, the presence of risk and economic instability in the family life, and the all important link between consumerist knowledge and cultural capital that defines worth (Bourdieu 1986a) emerged in the transcripts as significant factors affecting financial decisions in relation to the children's education.

Cognitive capacities

Cognitive capacities are displayed in the education marketplace in several forms; firstly, in the **knowledge** that parents have or lack of the educational system, the locality, particular schools, the rules of the market, registration procedures, etc. Secondly, in the families' **access to information** emerging from formal and informal sources, and thirdly, the ability of choosers to analyse and utilise knowledge and information. Lastly, the class related **cognitive dispositions**: these are habits of the mind - the ways in which situations are analysed and decisions taken; what is necessary and obvious, the organisation and complexity of the decision making process and level of reflexivity surrounding it, as well as ingenuity, intuition and ability to improvise in certain situations.

School choice researchers (Ball and Vincent 1998) often relate these cognitive assets to cultural and symbolic capitals, since these are class related dispositions of the mind as Bourdieu (1986a) puts it. However, in this study these have been separated in order to make space for the presentation of a theme that has emerged from the data, that links knowledge and information and locates them on a separate conceptual plane from the two aspects of culture discussed earlier.

The analysis of the three groups of choosers demonstrated the development and accumulation of these cognitive resources, and this was indeed related to the cross- cultural adaptation process in which cultural and linguistic learning took place. As might be expected, international choosers lacked in both knowledge and information, and this hampered their participation in the market and process of choice. Although newcomers had somewhat better access to information, their relative lack of knowledge on one hand and their existing overseas knowledge on the other were often misleading and prevented them from structuring and organising the pieces of information that they had acquired into a body of coherent knowledge. In a sense, both groups had an insufficient 'knowledge base' and this impeded their ability to assimilate information. Veteran choosers were yet again in a different position: they were capable of making sense and re-structuring their knowledge in a way that enabled them to accumulate and absorb new information and were no longer hampered by their overseas knowledge.

In the presentation of the findings I highlighted the interplay between knowledge and information and demonstrated how these affected the parents' positioning in the educational arena.

Psychological empowerment

The notion of psychological empowerment builds upon Reay's (2000) concept of 'emotional capital', which constitutes the emotional assets individuals invest in others, and most commonly, parents invest in their children. These include emotional investments revealed through love and warmth, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern. The concept of emotional capital is linked with cultural capital since cultural reproduction takes place firstly and perhaps most importantly, in the family site (Bourdieu 1990) and thus relies to a great extent on the parents' abilities to invest in their children's physical and psychological well being, in their education and socialisation. Since in most Western societies mothers shoulder their children's socialisation process, emotional capital is often perceived as being mainly a feminine phenomenon (Reay 2000). It is

important, however, to rehearse Reay's (2000) distinction between emotions and emotional capital: emotions, or emotional involvement does not immediately translate to emotional capital. It is the type of psychological involvement that empowers others that may be considered as a capital.

Psychological empowerment is a slightly wider concept than Reay's emotional capital in that it includes a wider array of psychological endowments that parents bestow on others (not only their children), which may influence the children's socialisation process through role modeling and as well as through direct investment. In a way these psychological day-to-day endowments may be visualised as the parental mental engine that drives both the children's socialisation, and the re-socialisation process of adult newcomers. On the group level, it may be described as the community spirit that drives the intergenerational cultural transmission process.

In the data psychologically empowering actions occurred in many unexpected ways, some in the educational domain, and many in other domains. Perhaps the clearest example of psychological empowerment is the common tale told in many families of 'how we came here' and 'how your mother sacrificed her career so I can follow my dream'. This common tale details the emotional commitment that spouses make when they follow their partners as their businesses took them to London. In the process, they often had to sacrifice successful careers, comfortable life styles and vivid familial and social lives. This type of emotional empowerment that one partner may render the other often becomes a feature in the family's biography, and indeed an event that children will take on as part of their family's legacy, and in this case, their community's heritage.

The narratives of interviewees provided many anecdotes where investment in others (family members, friends, colleagues and community members) occurred. At the same time, because families were both on the giving side and on the receiving side of the psychological empowerment scale, the narratives of

the three groups of choosers provided different perspectives on the same phenomenon.

Two additional psychological themes that I would like to highlight here are firstly the impact of the relocation process and the intercultural adaptation process on the psychological capacities of respondents, and the centrality of social ties in restoring the psychological well being of these immigrant families. The narratives presented earlier discussed the relocation process and intercultural adaptation process, and in most of the interviewees' accounts, these processes were portrayed as psychologically draining experiences, which heavily taxed and depleted the adults' as well as children's psychological capacities. As demonstrated, this left the parents less able to invest in other domains. Because the school choice process for international choosers and newcomers required substantial learning of the unfamiliar system, parents often found themselves in need of both pragmatic and psychological support. Veteran choosers were once again in a different position to the rest: with their recuperated psychological capacities, they were able (and indeed willing) to render psychological support to newcomers, and this was also where social ties – especially within the immigrant community – assumed a crucial role in restoring the emotional well being of these families.

Statutory positioning

Statutory positioning relates to the legal status of the families from the immigration perspective. This positioning may be seen as the most trivial asset the families may or may not have, yet its impact may spillover to other domains and capacities. Statutory positioning is not only about their residential status or what type of visa they have or how long a family can stay in London, but how long they wish to stay and what kind of status they hope to acquire, and perhaps most importantly from the educational perspective, do they see their stay in London as permanent or temporary.

The comparison between the three groups of choosers portrayed in the earlier chapters highlighted the differences between them not only in their current positioning, but also their aspiration for the future. International choosers and newcomers often lacked basic statutory assets and their legal status placed various constraints on their school choice process. However, it was their intentions upon arrival and their planned length of stay that hampered their choice process more significantly: if migrants anticipate returning home, if they regard their stay in the host society as a temporary event in their lives, then they are less likely to want to invest in long term educational planning. As the narratives of newcomers and some veterans demonstrated, these temporary arrangements have often become more enduring than intended. The veterans' statutory positioning was less transient, as most have acquired citizenship rights. Accordingly, most veterans engaged in long term planning and investment in education. However, a minority among this group developed a 'culture of temporariness' where they aspired to return migrate but did not translate this wish into action. Nonetheless, the possibility of return affected their choice process and their investment in education in general.

Between deficit and privilege

The review and analysis of the choosers' 'critical capitals' – the resources and skills which enabled these parents to negotiate with the educational market, highlight three main points: the first revisits the research findings of many other studies conducted in Britain to claim that these **capitals mattered**. As shown in the narratives of both the international choosers and the newcomers, the ultimate result of the choosers' state of deficiency in these resources and skills, was poor quality schooling, compromises that led to enrolment in undesired schools, multiple transitions and ethnic segregation. In contrast, the highly skilled and resourceful veteran choosers were capable of working the market to their advantage, competing for the best with determination and competence. The eventual outcome of their choice process diverged significantly from that of their unskilled colleagues: they were able to attain a position of privileged chooser at the end of the process, securing their children's places at their most highly desired schools.

The second point that emerged clearly from the developmental analysis was the **convertibility** of some resources. This was especially visible in the analysis of the choosers' social capital, which seemed to be capable of compensating for the lack of many other resources. Indeed all three groups of choosers utilised their social resources to obtain knowledge and information, to recoup their emotional capital when needed, to counterbalance for their poor cultural capacities or symbolic assets, and even their statutory positioning.

The third argument, and the central one that I shall propose here, is that market-fitness resources and capacities could be **developed and learned**. The comparison of the three groups on each parameter has shown these parents at their lowest points and at their highest, and as they developed their skills going from dearth to wealth. The development in their capacities – whether these were cultural, symbolic, social, psychological, cognitive, economic or statutory, seem to occur in parallel to their adaptation process, which may explain their willingness to learn and develop their skills. This may suggest that there may be

a way to empower disadvantaged choosers to obtain improved positions as educational consumers. However, some caution is required here, as the respondents who took part in this study were mostly middle-class, importing with them from their homeland some class-related resources, which may have facilitated their learning and enabled them to develop their market-aptitude in the way they did.

The one resource that I had singled out in this analysis was the choosers' identities, which brings into play both the choosers' cultural setting and their social environment.

Choosing schools, choosing identities?

Here I shall develop the main argument of this study, which is captured in the title of this dissertation, thus unpacking the bond between schooling and identity. The main argument that I shall present here, is that the choice of school, as an act of consumerism, represents the choosers' collective identities, and at the same time plays a significant role in reinventing these identities. Following the findings presented earlier, my main point here is that the choice of school signifies 'altarity', that is, the intersection between choice and change, where choosers are confronted with decisions that ultimately define their alliances and their identities. The choice of school thus engenders a cycle where identities are being framed as well as reinvented.

My theoretical standpoint is a consumptionist one but is grounded in identity theories (Hall 1996; Bauman 1988; Cornell and Hartmann 1998) suggesting that consumer action and identity formation intertwine. Bauman (1988) argues, that consumption is a pivotal means for reinventing and preserving self-identity and that individuals increasingly capitalise on their possessions to confirm their individual and social identities, including importantly, their class, ethnic, national and racial identities along with other identities (gender, professional etc.). My argument equates the choice of school to a particular type of consumerist action: club membership, suggesting that individuals construct their identities

through the properties they acquire, and particularly the organisations they affiliate with. The argument goes further to suggest that education is perhaps the most significant organisation one may belong to, because of its pending promise for intergenerational cultural and social reproduction. The search for the 'right' school brings the choosers' identities closer to the surface, as the school, like other acquired commodities and membership organisations, signifies the choosers' class, racial, ethnic, religious, as well as other identities. From this perspective, other members of the organisation, that is, who else goes to the school, becomes the central feature of choice and of the choosers' matching endeavours, and the search for 'people like us', becomes the essence of the choice process.

The second part of the cyclical argument suggests that once membership is gained in an organisation, such as a club or school, it becomes an extension of the self; it becomes a part of the family's everyday life, engendering the most significant social environment that the child and often the adults have links with, and perhaps most importantly, the school becomes a construction site for the family's identities (Cornell and Hartmann 1989), a part of the family's biography and its representation repertoire (Hall 1996). This is where the organisational affiliation engenders its members' identities.

It may be argued then, that the educational market fosters greater awareness of the choosers' identities because of the possibilities it presents for identity construction and cultural reproduction. In a sense, the search for the 'right' school becomes a shopping expedition for identity, symbolising the family's and the child's multiple identities, including, importantly, their class standing, their ethnic, racial, or religious affiliations, and indeed the child's learning identity. As such, it is likely to function as a segregative mechanism, a 'sorting machine' (Moore and Davenport 1989), that 'slots' choosers into organisations that correctly reflect their social standing and identities at the point of choice and is unlikely to operate as an integrative force, or as an agent of change.

Looking at the educational market from this perspective, it may not be surprising that the group of middle-class immigrants studied here carefully 'slotted' themselves into an educational niche market that reflected their class, national, religious and ethnic identities. The comparative angle provided by the division of the data into the three groups of choosers, captured them at different points of their cross-cultural adaptation process, each of which exposed their hybrid identities at a certain point of their journey, and all three capture them as they alter. The developmental account depicts the changes that occurred in their identities over time, revealing both how their school enrolment affected their affiliations and identities and also how the changes in their affiliations and identities affected their choice process and its outcomes. Despite the changes they experienced, the school choice story, for most of the respondents, remained one of separation and closure. However, the punch line of their immigration and adaptation story, surprisingly, does not run in parallel to the educational one and this is where the comparison between the embedded choosers and the detached becomes significant. The choice of school seems to have an impact mainly on the parents' generation, creating for the embedded choosers an ethnic environment that segregated them from others and affected their identities, while the detached slowly integrated in the host culture. However, the children of both groups seemed to grow apart from their parents' homeland cultural heritage, developing hyphenated dual-national identities and social bonds that spread beyond their parents' ethnic circles. The difference between the embedded and the detached families in this respect was in the pace of the children's adaptation, not the end result. At the same time, the middle-class positions of both parents and children remained stable. These processes, that is, the development of the parents' ethnicity, the reconstruction of the children's identities, and the maintenance of their class orientation, occurred through the chosen schools. Thus, it may be concluded that the 'choosing school – choosing identities' phrase, stands, for this migrant group, for the preservation of their class identity and the transformation in their national and ethnic identities.

Key points to endnotes

In the earlier parts of this dissertation, I examined school choice policies and reviewed the research carried out in Britain since the implementation of the ERA 1988. The literature review revealed that in the past 16 years since its implementation, this policy has emerged as a major factor in disadvantaging the disadvantaged and in empowering the powerful, and in maintaining and reproducing social divisions (Ball Bowe and Gewirtz 1996; Reay and Ball 1997; Walford 1992). Consequently, British researchers have voiced recurrent criticism of this policy arguing that the introduction of consumer culture into the educational arena is eroding the state's commitment to the concept of citizenship, and the role of the school as a democratic and integrative force (Ball 1993).

The research also exposed the mechanisms that produce these outcomes: these studies indicate that some 'educational consumers' - mainly working class families, members of minority ethnic or racial groups - are poorly equipped to deal with this market, since they lack the necessary resources and consequently they are vulnerable and disadvantaged (Reay 1998; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Bagley 1996). Their marginal positioning as consumers has led to two undesired consequences: poor quality schooling and segregation along class and ethnic lines (Ball and Whitty 1990; Walford 1992; Tomlinson 1998).

The 'disadvantage thesis' highlighted here was the starting point for this study in which the respondents were a group of first generation immigrants residing in London. Aiming to document the experiences of these families as they engaged with the educational market in their localities, the focus of this study was on the skills and resources they utilised as they assumed their roles as educational consumers, and on the circumstances and factors that occasioned segregation in education. To complicate this thesis further, the respondents who took part in this study were middle-class and seemed to have at their disposal some resources that could potentially compensate for their lack of market skills and

the resulting marginality in the educational market.

The literature on international migration has brought another factor into play: the tendency of migrants to maintain their cultural heritage and to form functional ghettos. Thus, I argued that the choice of school among immigrant families may reflect not only their ability to master the choice process, but also, the cultural properties and the values and identities, which inform their educational decisions. Following this line of argumentation I proposed that because schools are the main re-socialisation agents for immigrant children, they could become primary channels for integration. However, depending on the school's intake, schools can also become principal channels for segregation and ethnic ghettoisation.

The findings of this study confirm the arguments made by other researchers in Britain: consumer skills and resources mattered. The analysis offered here exposed eight types of capitals that have emerged in the data as the primary capacities and resources that these families drew on as they engaged with the education market in their localities. These were: cultural properties, social resources, identities, symbolic assets, psychological empowerment, cognitive capacities, economic means and statutory positioning.

The findings also highlighted the development that occurred in the choosers' consumerist skills, as the respondents were positioned on different sides of the market at different times. They began their journey as outsiders lacking the most trivial resources needed in the marketplace, a position that rendered them marginal and disadvantaged, and had adverse results such as poor quality schooling, multiple transitions and segregation. But with time, they developed their market skills accumulating the required resources, a process that enabled them to compete for the most prestigious schools in London and gain access to their desired schools. The development in their capacities suggests that there may be a way to empower disadvantaged choosers to obtain improved positions as educational consumers.

From a communal perspective, their enhanced market action indeed improved the quality of schooling their children attended, however, their segregative pattern of schooling remained fairly stable. Searching for the factors that occasioned segregation in education for this group of migrants, the focus of the research shifted to the cultural setting within which they lived, their social environment and their identities. The findings demonstrated that these three factors have had a crucial impact on the choice process and its outcomes, engendering a communal pattern of schooling. The role of the choosers' networks was particularly intriguing: these ties, especially those established with the ethnic community in London, directly affected the educational patterns of this immigrant group, by promoting transitions to 'communal' schools and by discouraging movements to other schools. Throughout this networking enterprise the more competent consumers – the veteran families - assumed a 'gate-keeping' function that served to reproduce a steady pattern of movement of newly arrived families to specific schools. More importantly, one the main research findings in this study shows, that by promoting concentration in particular schools, these networks provided the basis for community formation in the immigration area, while these community schools were embraced and consequently functioned as ethnic institutions.

However, once immigrant communities are established, they affect their members' lives, and particularly their identities. As the analyses illustrated, the group's ethnicity has become a lens, a cultural lens, through which these families perceived the education market and the schools, and this newly developed cultural stand-point, affected their educational decisions most heavily, which brings the discussion here to the title of this dissertation.

'Choosing schools, choosing identities' stands for the main argument of this study, which simply states that the choice of school, as an act of consumerism, represents the choosers' collective identities, and at the same time plays a significant role in reinventing these identities. The search for the 'right' school brings the choosers' identities closer to the surface, as the school signifies the choosers' class, racial, ethnic, religious as well as other identities.

Consequently, the search for 'people like us' placed the schools' intake at the centre of the choosers' consciousness, thus becoming the essence of the choice process. Once entry was gained, the school became a part of the family's biography and its representation repertoire. This was where the organisational affiliation engendered its members' identities.

It may be argued then, that the educational market fosters an awareness of the choosers' identities because of the possibilities it presents for identity construction and cultural reproduction and consequently, the search for the 'right' school becomes a shopping expedition for identity. Thus, the education market is more likely to function as a segregative mechanism that 'slots' families into schools that match their social standing and identities and is unlikely to operate as an integrative force, or as an agent of change.

No neat and tidy ending...

I entered this research with a perception that the education market in Britain operates as a class reproduction system, a view that banked on the research conducted in Britain since the introduction of the ERA 1988. I constructed my study in an attempt to examine the role of agency in reproduction aiming to provide a close-up view of the process. Because my respondents were first generation migrants, I needed to extend the notion of reproduction beyond class to other systems of power and hierarchy – particularly those brought by migrants: language, culture, religion and ethnicity. The findings documented the role of agency in social reproduction, exposing the ways in which the structure of the educational market, and the policies and procedures that govern the choice process became instruments of reproduction through which and against which families reacted.

The educational market is a complex social system where migrants who are positioned at its margins have to negotiate their journey from 'outsiders' to 'insiders'. As they steer through the market system and acquire consumer competencies, they find that this task is accompanied by another – being

slotted into a structured social order where their position is determined by their nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, and most importantly - class. Through their engagement with the education market they discover the social structure of schooling and their own place in that hierarchy. This means figuring out the particular meaning of their own ascribed categories, a process that has implications for the children's educational routes and for their future. The reproduction function of the market is obscured behind the choosers' individual choices and communal patterns.

Class, race, language, religion and ethnicity are categories with long history of meaning in this country, and centuries of relegating people to different experiences steeped in relations of inequality. The schooling market in Britain has a structure rooted in the history of this country: a history that embraces the rhetoric of diversity and multiculturalism, but consistently tends towards social exclusion. The negotiation of power in race, culture, religion, language and class unfolds in the working of the education market. The elements of the market as an ideological system legitimates the current power relations, contributing towards different access and experiences to different groups of people, thereby sorting them for their places in the existing social hierarchy. The education market is a particularly apt site to see the process of negotiation: as a gateway to the schooling arena many of the assumptions of society about who belongs where in the social hierarchy are revealed.

In many ways, the educational market can be seen as a metaphor that symbolises the process of migrant integration in Britain. As immigrants adapt to life in London, slowly acquiring the cultural and linguistic competencies that would enable them to integrate, they learn that these are not the only requirements for being accepted as British. They begin to see that to become British is to take their place in the social map of this nation; they face pressures to adopt identities that limit them. The story of this community is thus an illustration of the daily negotiation of minority ethnic groups with the host society over their own identities and their social positioning.

The story of this immigrant community and its engagement with the education market in London, is set in a subtext of anxiety and turmoil over the recent immigration waves and demographic changes that occurred in the past decades in Britain. The language that governs the public debates on migration tends to demonise migration: they talk about 'flood' or 'influx' of migrants threatening to 'swamp' or 'drawn' British life. Britain is in the midst of the struggle regarding the direction it would go as a multicultural society: what will be our response to diversity? Will we embrace diversity or enforce a more narrow and exclusive vision? Which course will it be? Fuller access and more inclusion or deeper inequality and more separation and exclusion? These are weighty questions with implications far beyond a single community.

The story of this community is fundamentally a reflection of those wider struggles about immigration and its impact on British society, our response to diversity and the role of schools in mediating multiculturalism.

Stories do not start and end where the researcher entered and exited. This story is indeed a chapter in a longer story, a long struggle. There is no neat and tidy ending.

The engagement of this immigrant group with the educational marketplace presented here is a mini-world in which the drama of migration and multiculturalism comes to life. The conflicts and dilemmas presented in this dissertation – those referring to educational provision, socialisation processes and ethnic identities - are relevant to many other minority ethnic groups whose members are torn between their desire to be British and their own ethnicity. The story of the Israeli families recounted in this study, is a chronicle of the struggle over diversity, both in terms of access to educational opportunities, and throughout the schooling process. It is a struggle over culture, language, nationality and religion, and a story of difference, inclusion and exclusion. It is also a tale of transformation, namely: Altarity.

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Appendix A:
Immigration, Post-migration Ethnicity and Citizenship

Can Chinese migrants be made into Americans? Pakistanis English? Russians Israeli? Algerians French? Turks German? These questions depict the exceptional shift of the Nation state in many western countries and the dilemmas entailed in the immigration process. This chapter delineates the setting within which this study takes place, from the immigration perspective. In what follows, I will attempt to locate the schooling patterns and experiences of the respondents who took part in this study, within the framework of their lives as first generation immigrants and set the scene for the findings chapter that follow.

Immigration in the post-modern era: possibilities and realities

Since World War II, international migration has become a primary topic in economics, political sciences, sociology, psychology, linguistics, geography, law, education, public policy, cultural studies and other social sciences. The interest of researchers has been inspired by the increasing number of migrants relocating world-wide, as well as the effects of immigration both for individuals and societies (Castles and Miller 1998).

The number of immigrants is constantly growing world-wide. In the period from 1945-70 100 million immigrants moved from one country to another – an average of 4 million a year; by 1990, the number reached 120 million – an average of 6 million a year. In total, it is estimated that around 2% of the world's population are immigrants. This suggests that taking up residence abroad is the exception, not the rule, and that most people reside in their countries of birth. Nevertheless, the impact of international migration is evident across the globe,

affecting both the sending and receiving societies (Castles and Miller 1998).

During the past decades, many of the social divisions once associated with spatial distance and cultural barriers have shrunk. Immigrants, refugees, temporary workers, expatriates and diplomats, overseas students and academics, professionals and others can move across national borders, changing their homes with relative comfort and freedom (Salt, Singleton and Hogarth 1994). At the same time, most of the receiving states monitor and control migration flows. In most Western countries inward migration is controlled and often restrained by the state, while outward migration flows are typically unregulated (Parekh 1994). States compete in the international market for skilled labour, and offer those whom they wish to attract various forms of services and legal arrangements. Many states have become more selective, actively seeking skilled foreigners and excluding others (Salt, Singleton and Hogarth 1994; Spencer 1994). As a result, immigration policies are constantly revised and updated, in an attempt to establish suitable social structures and social contracts which correspond with the demands of the local labour markets (Spencer 1994; Borjas 1999). The global labour market and the role of nation states in it, is often considered as one of the key social structures in determining human movement across the globe (Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998; Spencer 1994; Borjas 1999).

From the individual perspective, migration is frequently associated with new life prospects and possibilities for education, career opportunities, financial security and life style (Carmon 1995). The anticipation of improved life chances can encourage newcomers to assimilate within the host society and seek membership in it. At the same time, in many immigration gateway cities (Waldinger 1994; Zhou and Logan 1991; Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998; Castles 2000; Storkey, Maguire and Lewis 1997) immigrants and their descendants tend to form distinct ethnic communities which are often defined as 'ghettos'. Researchers have argued (Gold 1994; Borjas 1999: Waldinger 1994; Light and Gold 2000) that ethnic communities can offer substantial support to newcomers, and have a significant role in lessening the financial and

emotional costs associated with immigration. At the same time, the prospects for assimilation may decrease, as migrants preserve their original culture and language, and confine their social contacts to their ethnic networks (Zhou 1997; Waldinger 1995; Portes 1998).

Newcomers to London often face this immigration dilemma which relates to their mode of integration in the host society. London is one of the main immigration gateway cities in Europe and is visibly segmented into ethnic zones that are spatially defined (Storkey, Maguire and Lewis 1997). Thus, individuals who migrate to London, face an existential choice: to what extent will they integrate in the host society, and seek membership in it by adopting new cultural perspectives and national identity, or maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage and ethnic social ties. For some, these options are mutually exclusive.

This dilemma is at the heart of this study. The group of Israeli immigrants studied here, face these decisions in everyday life, and as they choose schools for their children. Each mode of integration opens different prospects, may present different types of obstacles, and may require different educational routes. This places the choice of school at the centre of migrants' integration process.

Cosmopolitan London

Like several other European countries, Britain received considerable migration, as well as a large number of refugees after the Second World War. In 2002 there were 4.2 million foreign citizens in Britain constituting 8.3% of the total population. Of those 417,000 (excluding returning British citizens) entered in 2001, however, because of out-flow migration the net migration in 2001 was 153,000 people (ONS 2004). The statistics also demonstrate that every year about 60,000 immigrants become citizens (Dummet 1994). The percentage of non-white minorities in Britain is also estimated at 8% (ONS 2004).

Nearly two thirds of the immigrants entering Britain every year state London as their destination (that is 90,000 immigrants every year). In 2001, London's population was estimated at around 7 million people, of which 24% were identified as members of non-white minority groups, while 22% of its population were born outside Britain (ONS 2004). If all foreign born individuals and non-white minority groups were classified as ethnic minorities (instead of just non-white minority groups) London would have had an ethnic minority population of 35% (Storkey, Maguire and Lewis 1997).

In some areas of London the percentage of minorities is more than 50% of the residents, often from one nationality, ethnic or racial group, while in other areas, the percentage of minority groups is less than 10% (ONS 2004). Like many other major immigration gateway cities in the West, London is spatially segmented into 'ethnic zones' (Storkey, Maguire and Lewis 1997). Within these zones some minority groups have developed an ethnic economy (Light and Gold 2000) – restaurants, shops, cultural and leisure organisations and other small and middle range businesses owned by members of ethnic groups. These businesses frequently service their own community. In some areas, an enclave economy has developed in which ethnic firms are clustered territorially, are economically inter-dependent, and employ ethnic employees (Light and Gold 2000). These ethnic economies are a source of support to members of the ethnic community. Some minority groups have established other organisations that render support to community members in other ways. Among these are charities of varied kinds rendering welfare, health, educational, cultural, religious and leisure services. Additionally, in an attempt to preserve the original culture and language among the young generation, some communities established their own schools (Gaine and George 1999). Most of these schools take the form of supplementary education, offering language, religious or cultural classes to children and occasionally to adults (Maclean 1985). Other, more institutionalised minority groups, have established day schools either in the independent sector or the state sector (Gaine and George 1999; Walford 1995).

These demographic trends – the in-migration flows and ethnic clustering - are being felt most dramatically in all levels of London's education system: currently, about 40% of London student population (a total of 1.8 million students) are identified as ethnic minorities, and approximately 25% of the students in London speak English as a second language (Storkey, Maguire and Lewis 1997; ONS 2004). Some schools in London have experienced an extensive shift in their population during the last decade: some have become ethnically diverse with no single ethnic group constituting the majority in the school, while other schools have become more segregated and ethnically homogenous. These schooling patterns seem to mirror the geographic segmentation of London into ethnic territories (London Research Centre 1999).

Today, the number of schools in London is 2850 (of these 445 schools, 15% are independent and the rest are state schools) (London Research Centre 1999; DfES 2004). About 5% of them are denominational (non Christian) schools representing minority religious or cultural groups (DfES 2004). These schools provide members of minority groups with a tool to preserve their culture and heritage. These schools represent the DfES multicultural approach where minority groups' tendency to preserve their original social identity is legitimized and enabled by means of religious, educational and cultural institutions (Gaine and George 1999). However, to do so, these schools often segregate their pupils from the society within which they live (Gibson 1991). These schools represent the immigration dilemma that many migrant families face upon arrival to London: choosing a religious or cultural school and choosing to preserve and reproduce the original culture implies (in some cases) segregating the youngsters from the host society within which they live. Thus, in the social engineering of integration patterns - schools seem to have a significant role, as do the parents who choose schools for their children.

This research is an exploration of such situation, where members of a minority group establish a collective pattern of school choice. The analysis of the school choice in this study, will therefore focus on the **processes** that produce segregation in education.

Appendix B:
Market forces in education: consumer culture and the decline of citizenship

School choice policies: a revolution for whom?

The recent drive to reform public education, seems to revolve around one term: School choice. During the last decade school choice policies have been implemented in many countries all over the world, thus becoming the most widespread reform in Education. Although choice policies are hotly debated and criticised, today, fifty states in USA, have adopted some form of parental choice (Cookson 1994; Clune and Witte 1990), in Britain, it has been introduced with the 1988 Education Reform Act (DES 1988), as well as in other countries in western Europe, parts of Australia, New Zealand (Waslander and Thrupp 1995) and Israel (Goldring and Shapira 1993).

School choice policies are often perceived as a revolutionary transformation (Chubb and Moe 1990a; Walford 1992; Ball 1990), which sets a new framework for schooling: schools are positioned in a market system, and parents have the consumer's responsibility - their aggregate choices will determine the performance of this market. Much of the support for school choice policies has been driven by the conviction that transferring power to the consumers of education will force schools to improve by subjecting them to the disciplines of the market. The main argument is that schools will be compelled to improve and become more responsive to their clients needs, to ensure their survival in the competitive market (Chubb and Moe 1990b). Schools which fail the consumers' test of popularity must not be protected against the consequences of their unpopularity: 'only the fit should survive' (Chubb and Moe 1990a; Finn 1987).

However, the introduction of 'market forces' into public services, and the educational arena in particular, is not entirely revolutionary. During the last decades governments in many Western countries have put forward legislations which privatised state owned enterprises and services. Many services, once produced and controlled by the State, have shifted to Post-Fordist mode of production: they are now organised through markets rather than bureaucracies (Bagguley 1994). Furthermore, most of the countries which adopted school choice policies have had a previous, smaller scale, more elitist form of market in education: private schooling. The growth of the private sector in many countries, became one of the triggers for the introduction of market policies into the state-owned system (Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore 1982; Walford 1993). In many policy papers and research literature, private schools are presented as a model to which state schools should aspire (Chub and Moe 1990a; DES 1992).

These movements towards privatisation and a Post-Fordist mode of provision, symbolise a transformation in the role of the state and a gradual retreat from Welfare State ideology. In many Western countries state education has become one of the few public services that are still owned, operated, provided and controlled by the state. Since education is widely viewed as the main mechanism for social mobility in democratic societies, and is still the main ideological apparatus and cohesive force of the state - attempts to privatise it, or establish a market system within state education, seem to encounter unparalleled criticism.

Some researchers argue that the shift from state regulation to market regime marks the dominance of consumer culture and individualist ideology (Cookson 1992; Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball 1994; Bash 1989) and a gradual decline of community foundation and citizenship. These researchers are concerned about the introduction of the ideology of consumerism into the education arena, and claim that if it replaces the ethos of citizenship, it may cause the destruction of public school system (Cookson 1992). These critical perceptions of school choice policies seem to bank on a prophecy of a general retreat from welfare state policies, and their implementation is seen as a momentous step towards

the privatisation of the most pivotal public service still owned and provided by the state.

Thus, the introduction of market strategies into education was followed by a passionate dispute in many countries (Fuller, Elmore and Orfield 1996). Advocates of choice policies, argue that the introduction of market strategies into education is an essential step towards fundamental reform. Some even perceive it as 'a panacea' for all that ails the education system (Chubb and Moe 1990b). Others treat school choice as a crusade, driven by a conviction that public schools are in a state of crisis and thus require and imaginative and radical change (Glenn 1989; Chubb and Moe 1990a), a change that only market strategies can bring about.

On the other hand these policies are criticised, even vilified, by opponents. Advocates of choice policies are often portrayed as uncompromising and careless reformers who show little interest in conventional methods for transformation and have little respect or tolerance for what they perceive as the mediocracy of the educational establishment. Many researchers and educators perceive the new commercial-like market configuration as a menace, and argue that these strategies constitute a possible threat to the very existence of public education. Some researchers argue that the education market is politically regulated defining the education market as a 'quasi-market' (LeGrand 1990; Carroll and Walford 1997). Other critics claim that failing schools do survive, and continue to provide their services, thereby reproducing and intensifying the maleffects of private schooling: racial and socio-economical stratification as well as further fragmentation of shared values that transcend race, class and location (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1995; Moore and Davenport 1989; Walford 1992; Tomlinson 1998).

The heated debate on school choice policies was followed by massive amounts of research. However, the literature on school choice policies, and mainly on their educational and social outcomes, does not offer a clear verdict on these policies (Fuller, Elmore and Orfield 1996): it merely demonstrates that these

policies can be used both for equitable and inequitable ends - depending on their aims, ideologies, structures, mechanisms and constraints. This empirical ambiguity is mainly a result of the diversity of school choice policies. School choice policies differ in their educational and social goals, ideologies, structures, mechanisms, and their outcomes differ as they are implemented in different geographical, cultural, political and educational settings. Furthermore, the market mechanisms assumes different shapes and forms in different localities, and in all of the current choice policies, the market device was introduced along with other mechanisms to achieve the policy's main goals. This fact alone makes it impossible to examine the effects of the market mechanism on schools and families.

An ERA of transformation

In Britain school choice policies were introduced with the Education Reform Act in 1988, and it is one of the most heavily criticised reform policies (Bash 1989; Walford 1992; Gewirtz Ball and Bowe 1996). Many researchers perceive it as a radical piece of legislation (Walford 1992; Bash 1989; Ball 1993). A comparison between the Education Reform Act in Britain and the introduction of market strategies in other countries (mainly in the USA) may highlight the radical features in the ERA and may provide some insights into the different ideologies, aims and mechanisms underlying these reforms.

The educational objectives specified by the ERA were very similar to those defined by other choice policies (Ball 1993). The main educational objectives were to **improve standards** of education and **students achievements** (DES 1988). The emphasis in these policies was on **quality, excellence, standards of performance and efficiency.** However, while in Britain these educational goals were at the centre of the reform efforts, other choice policies - mainly in the USA - placed social goals at the top of the policy agenda (Fuller, Elmore and Orfield 1996). These policies combined educational goals with social concerns for the weaker groups in society and thus centered their attention on

equity, **equality of educational opportunity, integration** and **access** (Glenn 1991; Fliegel 1989; Alves and Willie 1990; Nathan 1989; Raywid 1992).

The emphasis on social goals, and the attempt to promote equity and social integration in the USA, and the accent on educational goals which focus on quality and excellence in the Britain, marks a fundamental difference between the two countries (Maguire and Ball 1994). These basic differences in the educational and social goals of these reform efforts are clearly manifested through the distinct combination of strategies employed in these policies.

In many states in the USA, market strategies were implemented as part of restructuring efforts, and thus were integrated with many other devices which focused on school improvement. These strategies were often accompanied by 'weaker' forms of choice (such as controlled choice), that in fact, did not allow for the development of a free market in education (Raywid 1892; Glenn 1991; Alves and Willie 1990: Young and Clinchy 1992). In some areas, the implementation of school choice policies were accompanied by special devices that would 'protect' disadvantaged families and communities from the effects of the market. For example, in Boston, MA, were a large number of minority groups reside, an information centre distributes information about schools and procedures to all parents in 16 languages. The information is distributed by a face-to-face out-reach system. Furthermore, the intake of schools is controlled by the local authority, so that it is racially balanced, and all schools are constantly monitored and provided with resources which enable them to improve (Glenn 1991; Young and Clinchy 1992).

In contrast, in Britain a more ideal version of market strategies were implemented, and the market strategy is employed as a central component in the reform (David 1991; Ball 1993; Maguire and Ball 1994). Based upon per-capita funding, open enrolment registration procedures, and delegated school budgets, schools are expected to improve as a result of market trends on one hand, and the enforcement of a National Curriculum, accompanied by a National Testing System, on the other hand (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Ball

1993; Maguire and Ball 1994). These devices are often seen as contrasting (MacLure 1988; Walford 1994). Schools operating under a choice policy are required to diversify, and thus should have greater autonomy. But under the ERA schools are given more control over their administrative procedures (funding and registration) while their professional autonomy is constrained by the introduction of National Curriculum and its accompanying testing system.

Additionally, in Britain parents are expected to search and gather information by themselves, directly from the schools, LEAs, Media and other sources. Although most LEAs produce written information about the registration procedures, and league tables are published in newspapers, they are rarely translated to other languages, most of the information is not distributed to all, and the information included is rarely inclusive. Furthermore, school intakes are unbalanced and often promote social segregation. In spite of the DES 'Name and Shame' policy, 'sink' schools do survive, and continue to provide their services (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995). Gewirtz Ball and Bowe (1996) argue that the new education agenda in Britain have originated from the ideology of consumerism thus relocating the responsibility onto the individual consumer. Clearly, Market forces are at the forefront of the British school reform efforts, thus, making the education arena a unique laboratory of the market solution.

The mounting literature on the ERA and its effects on the education system, documents a profound structural and ideological shift towards consumer culture (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1996). The research literature (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1996) reveals that the ideology of consumership is gradually becoming a fundamental ethos in the education system in Britain. Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball's (1994) findings demonstrate that this ideology is manifested in the public talk: within the new 'language of choice', the parents' duties as individual parents are combined with an emphasis on their collective responsibilities as educational consumers. Good patenting is defined in relation to the parents responsibilities for the children's education; namely: the choice of school (DES, The Parents Charter 1992). Additionally, in Britain there is little concern for the disadvantaged or minority groups. Poor choosers are taken as bad parents. In

the policy papers, these parents are portrayed as the unfit parents and consumers, who are punished for their incompetence by the mechanism of the market (Ball 1993). In contrast, in the USA social welfare concerns feature at the centre of educational policies implemented today. Most of these policies reflect the concern for disadvantaged groups in society, and emphasise their commitment to social equity and social integration of minority groups (Glenn 1991; Alves and Willie 1990; Nathan 1993). In policy papers, there is often a clear definition of market strategies - as mechanisms, not an ideology.

The differences between these strategies and perceptions is also manifested in the education policies regarding immigrants and other minorities. In the USA, immigrants tendency to segregate, and reproduce their original culture, is only semi-legitimised: the multicultural approach is combined with a strong accent on social equality and integration (Bennet 1990; Colton and Uchitelle 1991; Nathan 1989). Accordingly, in most states, religious or cultural schools may not be established within the public school sector. In comparison, in Britain the educational policy is more geared towards a multicultural view. Although this orientation is not clearly manifested in policy texts, minority groups' tendency to maintain their culture and language is legitimised through the public funding of religious or cultural schools. Accordingly, the concept of social-integration of minority groups is practically non-existent, in policy texts (Bagley 1996; Walford 1992) nor in academic publications (although there is a concern about inequality issues in academic publications) (Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball 1994; Walford 1992; Maguire and Ball 1994).

In sum, although consumerist culture is a fundamental feature of American life - it did not become a leading ideology in the educational arena. The debate on school choice in the USA is blended with a broader debate on citizenship, national and ethnic cultures, integration and the role of school as socialisation agent and a unifying mechanism (Nathan 1989; Fuller, Elmore and Orfield 1996). Public schools in the USA (some currently facing large waves of immigration) are engaged in 'Americanization efforts' (Olsen 1997) and place citizenship education at the centre of the curriculum and social activities.

Schools are commonly viewed as a means for socialising children into the American culture, language and identity.

In contrast, in Britain the adoption of choice policies reflects the endorsement of individualist ideology and consumerism. Although Britain has one of the highest rates of immigration in Europe (ONS 2004), little attention has been given to citizenship education. The ERA introduced a new National Curriculum along with the choice policy, however, the debate on the introduction of the national curriculum did not revolve around notions of citizenship, and in fact, citizenship education was not a part of the new curriculum and was introduced for the first time only in 2003. These features of the British education system - the multi-cultural perspective, the lack of citizenship consciousness, and the elitist tradition, may have legitimised the introduction of consumer culture into the educational scene.

Much of the criticism of school choice policy in Britain was about the effects of markets in education on the social structure. Studies conducted in Britain suggest that the operation of the market benefits certain groups and disadvantages others (Ball 1993). Researchers in Britain are almost unified in their claim that the education market provides a mechanism for the reinvention of hierarchy and differentiation. The ideology of consumerism, competition and choice legitimises the social stratification and differentiation in the education system (Ball 1993). Bowe, Gewirz and Ball (1994) argue that consumption and social reproduction are correlated. Differences in modes of consumption and participation in the educational market are closely linked to class, race and gender (Bourdieu 1990).

In view of this critique, it is important to indicate that the ERA in Britain did not initially **intend** to achieve social goals, thus, it is highly unlikely that it will produce equality or integration in education. It is also important to recognise that the British education system has always been inequitable and socially stratified. Issues of racial integration and equality have not been at the centre of policy agenda in Britain since the 1960's (Ball 1993). Thus, the introduction of

market policy did not generate the inequality or social divisions in the system, although it has probably enables the reproduction of pre-existing inequalities and possibly the escalation of social divisions (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1996). In the absence of policy goals which promote equity, and mechanisms designed to rectify these social maladies, the current social outcomes may not be surprising. It is important to note here that the research findings from the USA suggest that even policies that specifically place issues of equality and integration as their main goals sometimes fail to achieve them. Elmore and Fuller (1996) argue that 'details matter in the design and implementation of choice policies' (p. 195), and it seems that the only types of choice policy that can achieve its social goals are Controlled Choice plans, where 'the hidden hand of the market' is controlled by educational authorities (Alves and Willie 1990; Nathan 1989; Young and Clinchy 1992). Walford (1994) concludes that the 1988 Reform Act introduced a wide range of ideas designed to hasten the privatization process within public education. In this privatized market reality, the slogan 'only the fit can survive' refers not only to the schools, but also to the 'customers' - families and communities.

Parents as educational consumers

The emphasis on the role of parents as consumers in the education market, was followed by studies who centred their attention on the practices of choice (Ball 1993; Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz, 1995; David, West and Ribens, 1994). These studies focused on the process of choice, demonstrating how parents negotiate with the educational market, and the ways in which their resources, or the lack of them, benefit some parents, and limit others. The research in Britain consistently reveals that some consumers - mainly working class parents, ethnic and racial groups and immigrants - are poorly equipped to deal with the education market (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1996; Ball, Reay and David 2002; Reay and Ball 1997).

Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe's (1994) findings suggest that 'outsiders' (mainly immigrants and minority groups) are particularly disadvantaged in the education

market: their capacities to negotiate with the system hinders their inclination to do so. Their cultural capital is in the wrong currency, their social capital is limited, and their symbolic capital is often inadequate. Further, their findings indicate that ethnic affiliation, culture and resulting values, play a significant role in choosing schools. Thus, they argue, the market system in Britain has become a class strategy.

Other studies (Reay 1998; Ball, Macrae and Maguire 1998b) demonstrate that the school choice process is informed by cultural capital and shared group perspective. Race and ethnicity incorporate a sense of shared culture which interfere in the choice process. Ball, Macrae and Maguire (1998) argue that "race' is part of the students complex topography of choice' (p. 182). In their interviewees' accounts 'race' presents symbolic barriers to choice. These studies reveal that the search for cultural familiarity and shared identity often dominates the choice process.

In sum, studies of school choice demonstrate clearly that choice is directly related to social differences, and thus, it emerges as a major factor in maintaining and reinforcing or reinventing social class divisions and inequalities (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1995; Walford 1993). These studies offer a detailed account of the differential positioning of families in the marketplace, addressing the financial, social, cultural, symbolic and emotional capital as key factors in the explanation of the families' position in the educational marketplace (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe 1996; Walford 1993; Reay 1998).

This is the key point and the starting point of this research. The research focuses on school choice process among people who are marginal in terms of their positioning in the educational market, with the aim of highlighting the effects of marginality on the decision making process.

The study reported here takes place in a unique multi-cultural laboratory of the education market: London. This study centres on the practices of school choice among a small group of immigrants who came from Israel, and are now

positioned in this unfamiliar educational arena, as parents and as consumers. By charting their process of school choice in relation to their identity and group affiliation, this study aims to conceptualise the relation between collective identity and educational consumerism.

Appendix C: Interviewees' Data

Pseudonym No. Date	Children's details: gender and age	Length of stay in and migration status	Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated	Dwelling	Mother's Education Occupation and current job	Father's Education Occupation and current job	Parents' place of birth
Adam & Sari 1 7/12/97 Key informant	Girl – 14 Girl - 11	Veterans - 8 years Transnational Citizens Returned 2000	Embedded Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	MA Psychologist Self employed	MBA Researcher / business advisor PhD Student	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Ben & Dalia 2 2/2/97 Key informant	Girl – 16 Girl – 11 Boy - 10	Veterans - 5 years Settlers Residents	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Rented	MD Gynecologist Resident at hospital	MD Gynecologist Completing PhD – full time study	Mother – Israel Father - Romania
David & Gila 3 6/2/97	Girl – 8 Boy - 6	Newcomers - 3 years Sojourners Residents Returned 1998	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Rented	BSc in PE PE teacher Self employed – PE classes	PhD – engineering Doing his post PhD at university	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Dan 4 7/4/97	Boy – 10	Newcomers - 3 years Sojourners Residents Returned 1999	Embedded Not - integrated	Flat Rented	-	Artist Msc student at college of alternative medicine	Father - Israel
Talia & Jonathan 5 9/4/97	Boy – 21 Girl – 19 Girl – 16 Girl – 14 Boy – 11 Girl - 9	Veterans - 10 years Citizens	Embedded then detached Not integrated then integrated	Semi detached Rented	BA Music. Musician	BA in Art Artists	Mother – USA Father - Israel

Pseudonym **No.** **Date**	**Children's details: gender and age**	**Length of stay in and migration status**	**Embedded / detached Integrated / not – Integrated**	**Dwelling**	**Mother's Education Occupation and current job**	**Father's Education Occupation and current job**	**Parents' place of birth**
Rita & Gilad 6 10/5/97	Girl – 9 Girl – 6	Veterans - 4.5 years Settlers Residents	Embedded Not - integrated	Flat Rented	Social worker MA student Language teacher	PhD - chemistry Researcher Doing his Post PhD	Mother – Argentina Father - Argentina
Renni & Adi 7 12/5/97 Key informant	Girl – 11 Boy - 9	Newcomers - 2.5 years Transnationals Residents Returned 1999	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Rented	PhD in Biology - Researcher Doing her Post PhD at university	BA in philosophy Manager in pharmaceutical company	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Miri & Nathan 8 15/5/97	Boy – 14 Girl - 12 Girl – 10 Boy - 8	Veterans - 6 years Settlers Residents Immigrated to USA 2002	Embedded Not - integrated	Detached Owned	BA Self employed working with husband	High school graduate Manager of electronic company Self employed	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Dana & Udi 9 27/5/97	Girl – 11 Boy - 9 Boy – 7 Boy - 3	Newcomers - 2.5 years Transnationals - representative Residents	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA Social work Unemployed	Msc engineering Company manager - representative	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Liora & Dori 10 4/6/97 Educational informant	Boy – 17 Girl - 13	Veterans - 13 years Transnationals Citizens Returned and re-immigrated	Embedded Not - integrated	Detached Owned	MA Mathematics + education Head teacher of a supplementary School	MSC in engineering Manager of telecommunication company Self-employed	Mother – Israel Father - Israel

Pseudonym **No.** **Date**	**Children's details: gender and age**	**Length of stay in and migration status**	**Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated**	**Dwelling**	**Mother's Education Occupation and current job**	**Father's Education Occupation and current job**	**Parents' place of birth**
Orna & Uri 11 7/6/97 Key informant	Girl – 12 Girl - 11 Boy – 9	Veterans - 6 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not - integrated	Detached Owned	Msc in computing and BA in music Computer contractor and musician	MBA Management + BA Computing Computer contractor	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Anat & Ophir 12 1/7/97	Twin boys – 10 Boy - 6	Newcomers - 2.5 years Sojourners - representative Residents Returned 1998	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Rented	BA in Law MA Student - Law	BA in Law Lawyer - representative	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Ruth & Asher 13 2/8/97	Boy – 17 Girl - 11 Girl – 9	Veterans - 17 years Settlers Citizens Transnational	Embedded Not - integrated	Detached Owned	BA in Arts Unemployed – doing charity work	Scientist – partner in various companies Self employed	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Ella & Eric 14 8/8/97 Educational informant	Girl – 12 Girl - 10	Veterans- 25 years Settlers Citizens	Detached then embedded Not – integrated	Terraced-Owned	High school graduate + dieticians diploma Works as Hebrew teacher at Israeli Sunday school	High school graduate + car mechanics diploma Owns mobile garage – self employed	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Rachel & Samuel 15 22/9/97	Girl – 12 Girl – 10 Boy - 4	Veterans - 11 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not - integrated	Terraced-Owned	High school graduate unemployed	High school graduate Launderette owner	Mother – Israel Father - UK

Pseudonym **No.** **Date**	**Children's details: gender and age**	**Length of stay in and migration status**	**Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated**	**Dwelling**	**Mother's Education Occupation and current job**	**Father's Education Occupation and current job**	**Parents' place of birth**
Galit & Amon 16 28/9/97 Educational informant	Boy – 17 Girl - 15 Girl – 9	Veterans - 14 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA in education Hebrew teacher at University	BSC Sales manager	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Ornit & Barak 17 23/9/97 Educational informant	Girl – 10 Girl - 7 Girl – 3	Newcomers - 2 years Transnationals representative Residents Transnational Returned 1999	Embedded Not -integrated	Semi-detached Rented	Communication therapist MA Student	Msc Manager of computer company - representative	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Nira & Yosi 18 10/10/97 Key informant	Boy – 11 Girl - 9	Veterans -16 years Settler Citizen Returned and immigrated	Embedded Not -Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	High school graduate Self employed Administrator of estate agency	High school graduate Self employed Manager of Estate agency	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Gita & Eyal 19 9/1/98	Boy – 16 Boy - 13 Boy – 11	Veterans -11 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not -integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA in arts Unemployed	MBA Business Manager – self employed Insurance and investment	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Michal & Mordechai 20 22/1/98	Boy – 11 Girl - 9 Girl - 4	Veterans -12 years Settles Citizens	Embedded Not -integrated	Semi-detached Owned	High school graduate Unemployed	High school graduate Self employed Food supplier	Mother – Israel Father - Israel

Pseudonym No. Date	Children's details: gender and age	Length of stay in and migration status	Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated	Dwelling	Mother's Education Occupation and current job	Father's Education Occupation and current job	Parents' place of birth
Tammie & Sean 21 24/1/98	Girl – 19 Girl - 16 Boy – 13	Veterans -14 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Owned	Nursery teacher Self employed – owns a nursery	BSC in Engineering Self Employed Owns a freight company	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Ada & Yehuda 22 4/2/98	Boy – 14 Girl - 11	Veterans -9 years Settlers Citizens	Detached then Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Owned	High School graduate Property manager – self employed	Bsc Sales Manager Property developer Self employed	Mother – Tunisia Father - Tunisia
Margalit & Hagay 23 10/2/98	Boy – 16 Girl - 11	Veterans -13 years Settlers Citizens Returned and re-immigrated	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Owned	Researcher – chemistry MBA student Lecturer	PhD in engineering Scientist – employed by chemistry company	Mother – Israel Father - UK
Adina & Ariel 24 1/3/98 Key informant	Boy – 11 Girl - 6	Veterans - 5 years Sojourners Residents Returned 1999	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Rented	BA in media studies Journalist Self employed Travel agent	BA in engineering Self employed Hardware for computer photography	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Sharon & Zvi 25 7/3/98	Boy – 25 Girl – 23 Girl – 21 Boy – 17 Girl - 11	Veterans - 13 years Transnationals Citizens	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Owned	SEN teacher MA student in SEN education	Msc in sciences Hotel owner + investor Self employed	Mother – Israel Father - Iran
Dini & Motti 26 8/3/98	Girl – 12 Girl – 10	Newcomers - 2 months Settlers Residents	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Owned	Msc in IT Software analyst – freelance Unemployed	B- Law Lawyer Hotel owner Self employed	Mother – Israel Father - Israel

Pseudonym **No.** **Date**	**Children's details: gender and age**	**Length of stay in and migration status**	**Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated**	**Dwelling**	**Mother's Education Occupation and current job**	**Father's Education Occupation and current job**	**Parents' place of birth**
Tali & Sefi 27 10/3/98 Key informant	Girl – 16 Boy – 11	Veterans - 8 years Settler Citizen	Embedded Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA in Hebrew and education Hebrew teacher – head of Hebrew dept at a college	BSc Management Police officer Head of security – credit card com.	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - Sweden
Meirav & Itsik 28 11/3/98	Girl – 8 Girl - 3	Newcomers - 2 years Sojourners Residents Transnationals	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi-detached Rented	BA in art Unemployed	BA in Law Lawyer Business management Self employed	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Zehava & Yaniv 29 12/3/98	Boy – 11 Girl – 9 Girl – 7 Boy – 4	Veterans -18 years Transnationals Citizens	Embedded Not - integrated	Detached Owned	High school graduate Unemployed	High school graduate Self employed Manager of telecommunication com	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Iris & Gal 30 13/3/98	Boy – 25 Girl – 23 Boy – 11 Girl - 9	Newcomers - 6 months Residents Returned 2000 Transnational	Embedded Not - integrated	Detached Owned	BA in arts Model and designer Unemployed	High school graduate Self employed Investor / real estate developer	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Talma & Duddi 31 2/4/98	Girl – 9 Girl – 6 Girl – 2	Newcomers - 2 years Sojourners Expatriate Returned 1999	Embedded Not - integrated	Flat – Rented	SEN teacher Sunday school teacher	BA in media PR manager Expatriate	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Sharona & Roy 32 6/4/98	Boy – 11 Girl – 9	Veterans- 5 years Settlers Residents Returned and re-immigrated	Embedded Not - integrated	Semi- detached Owned	MBA Investor Self employed – Market research	BSc in IT Computer analyst Self employed Computer contractor	Mother – Israel Father - Israel

Pseudonym No. Date	Children's details: gender and age	Length of stay in and migration status	Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated	Dwelling	Mother's Education Occupation and current job	Father's Education Occupation and current job	Parents' place of birth
Avi & Ariella 33 8/4/98	Girl – 11 Girl – 8 Girl - 11	Newcomers - 1 year Sojourners Expatriate Returned 2001	Embedded Integrated	Semi-detached Rented	MA in drama Student towards MA	MA in Psychology Expatriate	Mother – Israel Father - South Africa
Karen & Niv 34 3/5/98 Educational informant	Boy – 15 Girl – 13 Boy – 9	Newcomers - 6 months Sojourners – representative Residents Returned 2002	Detached then Embedded Not integrated	Detached – Owned	MA in Hebrew literature Teacher Teacher in Israeli high school	MSC in IT Software Developer Manager of software company	Mother – Israel Father - UK
Ilana 35 16/4/98	Boy – 18	Veterans - 6 years Settlers Citizens	Detached Integrated	Semi-detached Rented	High school graduate Shop owner Freelance sales person	-	Mother – Israel
Shoshi & Gabi 36 3/3/99	Girl – 16 Boy - 14	Veterans - 14 years Settlers Citizens Returned and re-immigrated	Detached then Embedded Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	Secondary school graduate + FE education – admin Secretary for supermarket	Diploma – coll of Hair dressing Self employed hair dresser	Mixed marriage Mother – UK Father - Israel
Haggit & Shay 37 13/3/99	Girl - 10	Veterans - 5 years Settler Citizen	Detached, then embedded Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	High school graduate Yoga teacher Self employed	Secondary school graduate Self employed on IT	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Einat & Nisim 38 27/3/99	Girl – 11	Veterans - 18 years Settler Citizen	Detached Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	High school graduate Administrator for a supplementary school	B-law Lawyer Partner at law company	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK

Pseudonym No. Date	Children's details: gender and age	Length of stay in and migration status	Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated	Dwelling	Mother's Education Occupation and current job	Father's Education Occupation and current job	Parents' place of birth
Orit & Michael 39 13/4/99	Boy – 14 Boy – 11 Boy – 8	Veterans -10 years Settlers Citizens Returned 2001	Embedded Integrated	Detached Owned	MBA Unemployed	High school graduate Self employed – real estate and investments	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Bracha & Noah 40 3/5/99 Educational informant	Boy – 27 Girl – 24 Girl – 21 Girl - 15	Newcomers- 3 years Sojourners Expatriate Returned 2000	Embedded Not integrated	Detached Rented	Bed Head teacher Head of a supplementary school	High school graduate Manager of agricultural export - expatriate	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Sigal & Ofer 41 5/5/99	Boy – 15 Girl – 11 Boy – 8	Veterans - 30 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not integrated	Semi-detached Owned	High school graduate Administrator Freelance – self employed	High school graduate Self employed – telecommunication company	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Ofra & Yuval 42 6/5/99	Boy – 11 Boy – 9 Boy – 5	Veterans - 8 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA social work Social worker MA student Social worker	MA social work Social worker PhD student Family therapiest	Mixed marriage Mother – Argentina Father - UK
Sima & Hemi 43 8/5/99	Boy – 17 Boy – 11	Veterans - 22 years Settlers Citizens	Detached Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA in arts Artist / Jeweler Self employed	B-Law Lawyer Employee at law firm	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Ester & Jacob 44 2/6/99	Girl – 10 Girl – 6 Boy – baby	Veterans - 4 years Sojourners Citizens	Embedded Not integrated	Detached – Rented	MA in drama Theater director - freelance	B-Law Self employed Real estate developer manager of company	Mother – Israel Father - UK

Pseudonym **No.** **Date**	**Children's details: gender and age**	**Length of stay in and migration status**	**Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated**	**Dwelling**	**Mother's Education Occupation and current job**	**Father's Education Occupation and current job**	**Parents' place of birth**
Aviva & Zohar **45** **6/6/99**	Girl – 17 Boy – 13 Girl – 3	Newcomers - 6 months Sojourners - representative Residents Returned 2000	Embedded Not integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA Educational Counselor MA student Unemployed	MSc engineering Representative – Investment in real estate	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Yehudit & Ronen **46** **6/7/99**	Girl – 26 Girl – 24 Boy – 21 Girl - 15	Newcomers - 2 years Sojourners Expatriates Returned 2001	Embedded Not integrated	Semi-detached - Rented	MA in education – SEN Teacher at supplementary school	MA in history / politics Expatriate	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Ronit & Ziv **47** **7/7/99**	Girl – 22 Boy – 17	Veterans - 13 years Settlers Citizens Returned and re-immigrated	Embedded then detached Not integrated	Semi-detached Owned	MA artist and cloths designer Self employed	BA in economics Self employed Investor	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Orli & Boaz **48** **8/7/99**	Boy – 8 Boy – 4	Newcomers - 3 years Sojourners Residents Returned 2002	Detached Integrated	Semi-detached Rented	MA psychology PhD student - psychology	BA in IT Computer contractor	Mother – USA Father - Australia
Carmela & Amos **49** **10/7/99**	Boy – 18 Boy – 11 Boy – 8	Veterans - 13 years Settlers Citizens	Detached Integrated	Terraced Owned	MA psychology Psychologist Self-employed	MA Jewish Studies PhD student Lecturer at Jewish college	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK

Pseudonym **No.** **Date**	**Children's details: gender and age**	**Length of stay in and migration status**	**Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated**	**Dwelling**	**Mother's Education Occupation and current job**	**Father's Education Occupation and current job**	**Parents' place of birth**
Shelly & Gilad 50 11/7/99	Girl – 22 Boy – 20 Girl – 15	Veterans - 27 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not integrated	Detached Owned	BA – general studies Unemployed Doing Voluntary work	BA in economics Partner in shipping company	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Ziva & Rafi 51 13/7/99	Girl – 17 Girl – 15 Boy – 12	Veterans - 22 years Settlers Citizens	Detached Integrated	Detached Owned	B-Law Lawyer Self employed	B-Law Lawyer Self employed	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Rinat & Golan 52 15/7/99 Educational informant	Girl – 26 Boy – 21 Girl – 15	Newcomers - 3 years Sojourners Expatriate	Embedded Not integrated	Semi-detached Rented	BA – education Works at embassy	BA in economics Banker Expatriate - Bank	Mother – Israel Father - Israel
Malca & Haim 53 16/7/99 Educational informant	Girl – 23 Girl – 21 Boy – 19 Boy – 15 Boy - 13	Veterans - 17 years Sojourners Citizens Returned and re-immigrated	Detached Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA in Jewish studies and education Teacher in Jewish school	BA in Jewish studies and education Teacher in Jewish school	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Yael & Hemi 54 1/8/98 Educational informant	Girl – 16 Girl – 14 Boy – 8	Veterans - 22 years Settlers Citizens	Detached Integrated	Semi-detached Owned	MA Education Teacher in Jewish school	BLaw Barrister	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Sarit 55 2/8/98	Girl – 26 Boy – 24 Boy – 21 Girl - 17	Veteran - 4 years Sojourner Expatriate Returned 2000	Embedded Not integrated	Semi-detached Rented	PHD Student – education Expatriate – curriculum developer		Mother – Israel

Pseudonym No. Date	Children's details: gender and age	Length of stay in and migration status	Embedded / detached Integrated / not - integrated	Dwelling	Mother's Education Occupation and current job	Father's Education Occupation and current job	Parents' place of birth
Shani & Itai 56 10/8/98 Educational informant	Boy – 15 Boy – 13	Veterans - 19 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Not integrated	Semi-detached Owned	BA education Hebrew teacher Teacher at supplementary school	B-Law Lawyer Employee at law firm	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Nava & Ron 57 13/8/98	Girl – 14 Girl – 11 Girl – 7	Veterans - 17 years Settlers Citizens	Mother – embedded, family – detached Integrated	Terraced Owned	MA Media Editor of Israeli News paper	BA media Freelance TV director	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Shir 58 19/8/99	Boy – 16	Veterans - 17 years Settlers Citizens	Detached Integrated	Terraced Owned	High school graduate Student of alternative medicine		Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Alina & Orion 59 15/9/99	Girl – 10	Veterans - 13 years Sojourners Citizens Returned 2003	Embedded Integrated	Flat Owned	BEd Teacher Insurance company – administrator	High school graduate Sales person in building co.	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK
Dronit & Gur 60 19/9/99	Girl – 16 Boy – 14 Boy – 12 Girl - 10	Veterans - 19 years Settlers Citizens	Embedded Integrated	Detached Owned	BEd Yoga teacher Travel agent	BEd Teacher Real estate investor Self-employed	Mixed marriage Mother – Israel Father - UK

Appendix D: Research - An Insider's Perspective

This section is a reflexive account of the process of research. In what follows, I will describe some aspects of my research, demonstrating few of the complexities involved in my position as an 'insider' in the researched community.

Membership

My position in the Israeli community in London could be best described as 'complete membership' (Adler and Adler 1987). I had the opportunity to study my own people and culture in a setting within which I was already a member:

> I share with my respondents large areas of my life. As members of an immigrant community we share a culture and a language, social and religious identities, beliefs and commitments that are deeply rooted in our collective national backgrounds. Further, the Israeli community in London had had a significant role in my life before I started the research: large parts of our family life were lived in this community, and within its socio-geographical space. When I started the research, I had already come to see it as *my* community (Research diary 26.9.97).

Membership in the Israeli community in London involves two 'admission criteria': national-religious (and linguistic) identity and a time scale. To become a member in this informal community, one has to be an Israeli-Hebrew-speaking-Jew, who lives (at least for few months) in London. Yet, membership entails access, and access requires certain resources. The Israeli community has not established ethnic institutions through which new members may enrol in it. Thus, many of my interviewees found their way into the community - as we did - through the choice of school. Many of my initial contacts with Israeli parents were established through the school my

children attended, and their social activities. To gain access to this network of Israeli families with school aged children, I had to have similar familial status, and to become involved in the school-based-mothers-network. Thus, my motherhood was an essential part of my position as an insider, and a significant factor in the research. My position as an insider in the researched community builds on four foundations:

Affinity: this domain suggests that my position as an insider was based on friendship ties, and on intimate acquaintance with the families who participated in the study.

Resemblance: at times my position as an insider was founded on the awareness of the commonalties we share. As members of an immigrant community we share an identity which is rooted in culture and language and many collective experiences. We also share the immigration experience and the understanding of our present circumstances as migrants and ethnics living in London.

Involvement: this dimension acknowledges that my involvement in the community, became a foundation on which my position as an insider was established. Some of this involvement was manifested through my role as an information provider to Israeli parents on educational issues.

Subjectivity: this domain recognises that my own experiences, as a mother, community member and immigrant, are blended into the research agenda, and inform the research process.

These foundations may be viewed as lenses through which I approached the field and related to informants.

Crossing the lines: between the I site and the research site

When I started the research I did not plan to do an ethnographic study, nor did I regard myself as a field-worker. My initial intent was to use quantitative methods to collect data, and analyse it. Yet, my position as an insider presented me with opportunities to experience life and observe events from a close perspective:

I had the opportunity to examine and face life as an immigrant from the same position as my respondents, and to take part in the collective effort of the group to make sense of their environment, interpret life, ascribe meaning, negotiate with their surroundings and create social structures. However, conducting a study on the experiences that I was personally going through was often problematic, while attempts to detach myself from the research phenomenon were difficult and at time impossible. During the time that I collected data, I was constantly crossing the lines between 'the personal site' and 'the research site', shifting between different ways of being, thinking, experiencing, relating and inquiring. At times I had struggled to carve a space for my research role to emerge within my existing relationships. During interviews, the schedule that I had planned to use - was frequently abandoned, as the conversation became unstructured and creative, and as interviewees began to take leading role in the conversation. In the participant observations I was typically a complete participant rather than an observer, expected to engage fully in the event, voice my own views and opinions, tell my own narratives and communicate in a way that might influence participants' views. Most times, I was immersed in the field, fully engaged emotionally and intellectually, to the point that my own everyday life, views and narratives became a part of the research data. At other times, the research site was just one part of my everyday life and I was able to disengage and create the analytical space that I needed in order to analyse the data. These fluctuations in the scope of my role as a researcher informed, filtered, inspired and framed the patterns of observation, the routes of analysis I have chosen and the modes of representation (Research diary 10.10.98).

The confines of familiarity

This part centres on my position as an insider. In what follows I will describe four situations where familiarity, affinity and intimacy may have imposed restrictions on the process of research. These accounts do not suggest that the insider's position have adverse effects on the research process; my experiences demonstrate that this position entails many advantages. Yet, in these accounts I will highlight situations, where the obstacles and limitations were blended with the blessings and privileges of the insider's position. Concentrating on the cultural aspect of the research, I will illustrate the limitations that may be imposed by the shared culture, language, and communicative practices, and highlight situations where these may hamper creativity and imagination, and expose the researcher's imperfection.

Captured by the Discourse

Interviewing in Hebrew and using the Israeli discourse (Katriel 1991), proved to be an advantage. Interviews build on the researcher's ability to communicate effectively with interviewees (Walcott 1995) thus, within the interview situation language proficiency and an understanding of the cultural and communicative practices are of tremendous value. Nevertheless, I was frequently concerned about the unconscious restrictions entailed in the shared communicative practices, and the way these may have limited and confined my ideas and questions, as well as the interviewees' narratives.

The shared communicative practices define what may be spoken of, and at the same time restrict the conversation. The knowledge of the issues that may be discussed in the interview situation - also contains the understanding of what is prohibited: what cannot be spoken of in this occasion, and what may not be quoted (Foucault 1981). The communication has its cultural boundaries and limitations which both the interviewees and me understood and conformed to, without giving it much thought. In this Foucauldian sense we were confined and captured by the discourse.

The language we use during the interviews, with its collective interpretations and meanings, became a construction site (Cornell and Hartman 1998), within which the interviewees reconstructed their biographies. In these situations, my insider's position became a part of this site, confirming its imagined structure.

Roles, Rules and Interactions

Confining myself to the role of the interviewer sometimes proved to be a difficult task, and at times I felt I was crossing the propriety boundaries between my role as a researcher and my inclinations as community member and friend. In many interviews parents have shared with me their thoughts, feelings and memories on an intimate and personal level. Some parents reflected about their actions and decisions. These accounts were sometimes painful and disturbing.

Interviews raise awareness. Some may have left parents painfully aware of their actions and how these have affected their life course. In these situations I felt the limitations of my role as a researcher, and was faced with a dilemma: do I leave the parents to deal with these unpleasant feelings on their own? Interviews are not therapeutic sessions, nor friendly chats, yet sometimes I felt the situation required an intervention or at least an emphatic comment.

One way of relieving parents' unpleasant feelings was by sharing my own experiences, thoughts and feelings. By doing so I was demonstrating universalisation (Nelson-Jones 1993). Many parents were relieved to discover that they are not alone experiencing and feeling the way they do. Yet, reciprocity in the interview situation has its own effects: the interviewee has the opportunity to ask questions and comment on my accounts. The norms of the interview are broken and the interview takes the form of a friendly chat.

As both the interviewees and I brought our biographies into the research situation, there was an interaction between our accounts. My own narratives

became a significant part of the research situation. As we negotiated the meaning of events and concepts, we jointly reconstructed the interviewee's accounts.

Role conflicts

My role as a researcher often enhanced my social standing among my fellow countrymen, however, the different functions I fulfilled in the community occasionally resulted in role conflicts. One of the hazards embedded in the insider's position is the researcher's capacity to influence the research phenomenon (Adler and Adler 1987). My role as information provider may exemplify this. During the data collection I became known as a source of knowledge on schooling issues, and many parents asked me to provide information or sought my advice on school choice matters. I responded favourably to most requests seeing this as part of my commitment to my community and my membership role. However, by supplying information and advice on these particular matters I was running the risk of influencing the phenomenon I sought to study. I had to make some difficult decisions regarding the type of information that I provided and often had to limit the information offered.

Situated Identities

In the course of research I had to consider the definitions of research categories. In this respect, my affiliation to the community, was at times very helpful, and at times - confining. This may be demonstrated by the following definitions.

The first definition that I had to consider is: who is an Israeli. This definition may not be simple since many Israeli citizens immigrated to Israel at some stage of their lives. Some of the parents were born in Britain, then lived in Israel, and later came back to live in London. Although they lived in Israel just a few years (one of them only 5 years), they defined themselves as Israelis. Others lived most of their lives in London and are now British citizens, yet they defined themselves as Israelis.

Although I did not always agree with these definitions, I accepted them. Nevertheless, I was puzzled. It brought to the surface the question of social expectancy: are they defining themselves as Israelis because they think this is what I expect of them? Would they define themselves in the same way if they were talking to a non-Israeli? Social identity - especially ethnic identity - as I came to realise - may be situated! (Okamura 1981).

The second set of categories and definitions was about the criteria for immigration: who is a permanent settler - and who may be defined as a temporary resident? These definitions are problematic in the Israeli cultural framework since there is a negative value system surrounding the issue of emigration from Israel. Emigrants from Israel are perceived as evading their obligations to the country and are treated as traitors (Gold 2002). Because of this value system, many families are reluctant to admit they decided to live in London permanently and refer to their life in London as temporary, stating their willingness to return-migrate some day.

My cultural knowledge was advantageous in this case: I was aware of the self-protective behaviour with relation to the issue of emigration. I knew and understood that this issue should be approached in sensitive way, so that the parents may feel comfortable with their decisions.

Immigrants from Israel are referred to as 'Yored' in Hebrew, which means also to descend, fail, or fade. During the interviews I informed parents that I will not use the abusive term 'Yored' and I will be using the term 'immigrant' instead. This symbolic declaration on my behalf signalled my attitude towards this issue. Most parents acknowledge my symbolic disengagement from this judgmental term and felt comfortable to discuss their decisions or future plans with me.

On the other hand, I noticed that this type of discourse is more easily provoked when speaking to another Israeli, and when speakers assume the Israeli cultural position. When speaking to a non-Israeli, this value system will rarely be addressed and different feelings, concepts and views may

emerge regarding the issue of emigration. In this case, the shared background and the absence of cultural barriers - has provoked a discursive restriction, which is a part of the shared culture. Clearly this is one of the limitations produced by similarity, and one of the disadvantages of being an insider.

On positions in research

One of the methodological debates in the study of ethnic groups is about the researcher's position. It is often argued that when it comes to qualitative research methods, the ascribed and asserted status of the researcher influences the meaning of subjective experiences. Whether an insider or an outsider, the autobiography, culture and social context of the researcher matter: these determine what the researcher can see and what they cannot see, and their ability to analyse data, and disseminate knowledge adequately (Adler and Adler 1987).

In this section I have illustrated some of the ways in which I experienced the authority of culture, and the confines of familiarity. Indeed, as these accounts demonstrate, studying one's own constitutive forces can be a painful journey of self-exploration, requiring constant deconstruction of one's perception of reality and self (Cornell and Hartman 1998).